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ABSTRACT

This curriculum planning guide is designed to serve as an aid and information source to assist senior management teams at Further Education Unit (FEU) technical colleges, curriculum leaders, and national and local agencies concerned with further education in the United Kingdom. The first two-thirds of the guide consists of 11 reports on the following challenges faced by FEU colleges: institutional development, resourcing, quality, adults, collaboration, flexible colleges, learner and learning support, core skills, National Vocational Qualifications, credit-based systems, and staff development. The reports are all based on the results of a project during which 22 FEU colleges were asked to audit their current position relative to each of the identified issues, analyze the challenges facing them, and formulate action strategies. Each report includes a summary of the colleges' perspectives, "snapshots" of the colleges' activities and experiences, and some key questions for consideration. Presented next are case studies of the following FEU colleges: Gateshead, Handsworth, Llandrillo, Lowestoft, Nelson and Colne, Tresham, and Yeovil. A matrix detailing college and themes, a list of 80 related FEU publications, and lists of participating colleges and advisory group members conclude the guide. (MN)

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Challenges for Colleges

Developing a corporate approach to curriculum and strategic planning

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Developing a corporate approach to curriculum and strategic planning



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TARGET USERS

- Senior management teams in colleges
- Curriculum leaders
- National and local agencies concerned in further education

Senior management teams This document can be used as:

- an aid to assessing your college's state of corporate development in relation to a cross-section of colleges;
- a support in making links between areas of development;
- background material for a similar exercise within your college;
- an external catalyst and focus for discussion within the management team;
- a background to thinking about roles within the management team;
- a support for a rationale and to develop strategies for senior management co-ordination of development work;
- a resource from which to assemble '*factors for success*' to check against your own activities.

Curriculum leaders This document can be used as:

- an aid to checking-out developments in key curriculum areas;
- an opportunity to see 'how other colleges do it';
- an aide-memoire for curriculum planning;
- a focus for course team reviews;
- a support for cross-college co-ordination of development work.

National and local agencies This document can be used as:

- a source of information regarding developments in the FE sector;
- an indication of the concerns and challenges facing senior managers in FE;
- a means of appreciating the interplay between developments within systems, e.g. resourcing, quality and qualifications.

GLOSSARY

APEL assessment of prior experiential learning
APL assessment or accreditation of prior learning
BTEC Business and Technical Education Council
CAT credit accumulation and transfer
CITB Construction Industry Training Board
CMIS computer management information systems (see MIS, below)
DES Department of Education and Science (now DFE, below)
DFE Department for Education (previously DES, above)
EVB evaluating and validating bodies
FE further education
FEFCs Further Education Funding Councils
FEU Further Education Unit
FTE full-time equivalent student
GEST Grants for education support and training
GNVQ General national vocational qualification
HE higher education

LEA local education authority
MIS management information system
NCC National Curriculum Council
NCVQ National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NETT National Education and Training Target
NVQ National Vocational Qualification
ROA Record of Achievement
RWE realistic work environment
SCUE Standing Conference on University Entrance
SEAC Schools Examination and Assessment Council
TDLB Training and Development Lead Body
TEC Training and Enterprise Councils
TEED Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate
TQM Total Quality Management
TVEI Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

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introduction

This document is based on work undertaken for the Further Education Unit's Key Curriculum Developments project in 1992. The project involved a representative sample of 22 colleges in England and Wales. There were four main aims:

- to promote synergy between curriculum developments, organisational and resourcing changes, and quality systems, in the lead-up to incorporation;
- to help support and develop a corporate approach which integrates curriculum planning and development with other aspects of planning;
- to work alongside colleges, accelerate developments and encourage colleges to explore their shape for incorporation in April 1993;
- to extrapolate from the representative experiences of these colleges, key messages for:
 - the rest of the system
 - national agencies
 - FEU's future work

PROJECT THEMES A number of key curriculum themes were identified as representing particular challenges for colleges as they prepared for incorporation. Activity in the 22 colleges centred around three core themes:

- **ADULTS**
- **RESOURCING**
- **QUALITY**

and the choice of two further themes from:

- *Institutional development*
- *Collaboration*
- *Core skills*
- *Flexible colleges*
- *Learner and learning support*
- *Institutional development*

- *National vocational qualifications*
- *Modularisation, the credit framework and credit-based systems*

Participation was originally identified as a separate theme but, not surprisingly, was addressed by most colleges in the context of their other chosen themes. Colleges were asked to focus on the integration of these themes and to consider the implications for strategic planning.

- **AUDITING AND ACTION PLANNING** Project teams in the 22 sample colleges were invited to audit and analyse their existing position in relation to each theme.

With the help of FEU Development Officers, each college then formulated a detailed action plan, matched to their particular development needs.

For many colleges, the process of auditing and action planning served to pull together previously disparate activities. As a result, implications for changes to management structures, staff roles and internal resourcing systems became clearer.

For some colleges, the opportunity to involve all staff in an audit was the most significant aspect. Other colleges were well on the way to a corporate approach, and involvement in the project had a 'galvanising effect' or served to accelerate decision-making.

IMPLEMENTATION The implementation stage of the project was very short, but there was no expectation that colleges were engaged in work that would begin and end with the project. Rather, FEU was supporting work in progress and hoping to accelerate and focus developments that would continue, in some instances, for years.

EMERGING MESSAGES Emerging messages for other colleges, national agencies, and the work of the Further Education Unit are summarised in this document.

AN FEU CORPORATE ACTIVITY This was FEU's first corporate development project. Twenty-one Development Officers, each responsible for different aspects of FEU's portfolio, worked within a common framework, mirroring the project's emphasis on integration and synthesis.

CRITICAL FRIEND By working alongside a wide range of colleges, during a period of unprecedented change, FEU was able to match its own planning and ongoing activities to the emerging needs of colleges. Moreover by offering expert curriculum advice, support for auditing and action planning, access to networking opportunities and national perspectives, FEU was able to enhance and accelerate developments, and extrapolate lessons for others. FEU was able to act as catalyst, critical friend and communication channel to other colleges and other agencies concerned in further education.

CURRICULUM-LED PLANNING A primary aim of the project was to support colleges in keeping curriculum issues at the heart of their planning and development, at a time when matters relating to governance, funding and buildings were jostling for priority. FEU was aware that much exciting and innovative curriculum development activity takes place in isolated pockets within colleges, with little connection to resource planning or organisational decision making.

During this period of uncertain transition, it would have been legitimate for senior managers to concentrate energy on putting their organisational and financial houses in order, and to move away from direct involvement in curriculum matters. However, it is FEU's experience that most college managers see themselves as, above all, managers of learning, and it was this role that we wished to support.

THE DOCUMENT This document offers a snapshot of activities and concerns in 22 representative colleges in the first six or seven months of 1992. Although incorporation provided a framework, many of the developments and issues described here arise from colleges simply going about their real business, and are not dependent on legislation or funding decisions. For this reason, FEU believes that developing a corporate approach to curriculum and strategic planning has a longer shelf life than a document relating solely to incorporation. Curriculum-led strategic planning is not a 'flavour of the month' or 'worth a try for next year'; it is central to a college's primary purpose.

Material was produced by colleges, and commentary and synthesis have been provided by FEU Development Officers. FEU also invited seven principals from colleges involved in the project to contribute their own distinctive voices. Their accounts of their colleges' experiences can be found in Section Three of the document.

This publication does not offer ready answers, but rather a rich resource for use by senior managers and curriculum leaders in colleges and as well as by others concerned in FE provision at local and national level.

Sue Carroll
Pat Hood
Project Directors
Further Education Unit

challenges for colleges

The 22 colleges participating in the **Key Curriculum Developments** project were asked to focus activity on a number of key themes, identified as representing particular challenges for colleges as they prepared for incorporation. For each chosen theme, colleges undertook an audit of their current position, analysed the challenges facing them, and formulated a strategy for action.

The resulting college reports have been analysed to provide a compendium of information and ideas for readers, under 11 theme headings, as follows:

THEMES:

Institutional development

Resourcing (core theme)

Quality (core theme)

Adults (core theme)

Collaboration

Flexible colleges

Learner and learning support

Core skills

National Vocational Qualifications

Credit-based systems

Staff development

- A summary of colleges' perceptions of the **CHALLENGES** facing them.
- 'SNAPSHOTS' of colleges' activities and experiences.
- Some **KEY QUESTIONS** for consideration by:
 - *colleges themselves;*
 - *national agencies;*
 - *others with an interest in the FE sector and the service it can provide.*

The first theme, 'Institutional development', provides a backdrop for the remainder of the section.

Synthesising developments

The questions of viability and survival are haunting all colleges at institutional level as they become independent. Planned mergers and 'joint ventures' mean that many FE colleges are already experiencing dramatic change. Individual members of staff are threatened by the ghost of redundancy and the effective break in their psychological contract with the college: neither loyalty nor security seems to feature as they did previously.

Can colleges establish a culture and organisational structure in which all staff are encouraged to contribute fully to the provision of a high quality service in keeping with the mission of the college and the purpose of the sector?

Can colleges establish a culture and organisational structure in which all staff are encouraged to contribute fully to the provision of a high quality service in keeping with the mission of the college and the purpose of the sector?

The need to make changes accommodating the new context leads colleges to take stock. Cultural issues addressing the question: 'How did we do? How are we doing things around here?' need to be re-examined and decisions made about 'How we will do things'. The choices highlight significant issues for the institution including:

- corporate leadership;
- shared vision and values;
- involvement, commitment and motivation of staff;
- communication — policies and practice;
- organisational structure;
- individual staff roles and capabilities.

Continuity through change

Mr principal of Lowestoft College emphasising the importance of the continuity of the local philosophy. *The college's survival is predicated on continuity of staff*

Pro-active approach to change

Coleg Gwent have taken the decision that while change is clearly necessary, it should progress by small stages rather than by abrupt major change. In coping with change, the college should be pro-active, and where practicable, seek to mould the change:

The new financial environment requires the development of a stronger corporate culture extending to the wider organisation as a whole, thus also threatening colleges' various sub-cultures. Cultural symbols such as an enrolment process, beliefs about financial rigour, 'take it or leave it' attitudes to courses, myths about access to higher education (HE) are all under challenge, as are the groups that share them. Sub-cultures based on the previous vocational backgrounds and mores of staff will be challenged and re-aligned.

dismantling. Change is continuous, and never deferred to as if to say 'We've done it'.

Equally, Derwentside

College's long-term goal is the ongoing development and maintenance of a culture of consensus in the college.

- the current social and political climate in which enhanced levels of efficiency and effectiveness are demanded;
- strategic as well as operational planning at college level;
- new funding sources, with attendant pressures on quality;
- new financial responsibilities, including premises and assets;
- employers' responsibilities for personnel, including trade union relationships;
- appraisal;

Colleges are currently faced with new imperatives which condition the environment in which they must position themselves. They must consider:

In the face of staff mistrust of changes in conditions of service, can significant shifts in staff attitudes be achieved in order to implement the full range of services demanded of corporate colleges in the 1990s?

Colleges are being driven to make fundamental changes to their curriculum and services in order to meet challenges such as:

- a wider range of clients, and demand for a range of modes of access, leading to the need for a year-round centralised guidance and 'admissions' service and extensive one-to-one tutorial support;
- financial constraints leading to a growth in home-based FE and HE students, necessitating provision for all-through progression. FE colleges need to meet the consequent demand for franchised and sponsored HE courses, despite the government slow-down on HE expansion;
- an extension of demand and achievement-related systems of funding (e.g. TEC funding; credit vouchers) which require colleges to deliver NVQs and provide flexible access to the curriculum and assessment. This entails modularising the curriculum, provision of flexible learning centres and realistic work environments (RWEs).

Such changes are perceived as imposing corresponding changes in:

- staff roles and conditions;
- systems for allocating resources;
- systems for monitoring and accounting to meet quality requirements.

Some of the existing working practices of lecturing and support staff may be inconsistent with the demands on a college, post incorporation.

Intrusive management

Governors, college principals and management teams need to establish staffing structures and working practices consistent with the changes affecting funding, quality requirements and the required range of resources. They need to establish a culture in which developmental change is a positive as well as continuous process. This is at a time when anxiety levels amongst staff are high, due to factors such as:

- recent redundancies;
- the introduction of new management information systems (MIS) which are perceived by some staff as intrusive management control systems;
- changes in staff roles, brought about by the spread of flexible learning approaches and competence-based assessment. Some teachers see these changes as an attack on their professionalism;
- fear and distrust concerning changes in conditions of service.

Some colleges reported that staff perceived the management strategies adopted for incorporation as intrusive.

These strategies included: the requirement for detailed new quality mechanisms breakdowns of information from teaching sections, in order to establish unit costs; and the introduction of new quality mechanisms.

Impending incorporation meant that these changes were implemented in 'top-down mode for speed', thus exacerbating suspicion and resistance. The realignment of teaching toward the management of learning is also regarded by some staff as an attack on their professionalism.

Can colleges succeed in involving staff in the goals of the institution and the need to increase participation and achievement and meet the quality and accounting systems of funding and awarding bodies, so that tools such as computer management information systems (CMIS) are embraced and used, rather than mistrusted and shunned?

Progress by means of achievable targets

Clear, simple targets expressed as 'key success factors' at Kingsway College and 'critical success factors' at Lowestoft, crystallise thinking and structure action.

Many colleges have identified aspects of their current organisational structure, systems and processes which need to be supplemented or amended to enable them to operate effectively after incorporation. These changes are necessitated by two main factors:

- new and expanded responsibilities;
- the need to bring together the management of curriculum, resources and quality, because, in the words of one college, 'Failure to get it right will mean no money'. It is also likely to handicap colleges in fulfilling their mission.

Quality of relationships

Derwentside College recognises that the quality of relationships is a key issue. Involving staff and increasing their sense of consensus, ownership and satisfaction avoids the adverse effects of

Colleges are trying to find ways of bringing together the functional responsibilities for resources and curriculum. Traditionally these functions have been managed separately, often allocated to two separate vice-principals with two separate line-manager structures and two separate communication systems.

ownership and satisfaction avoids the adverse effects of low morale on the college service to learners.

Involvement of staff in the planning process also reassures them that developments are under control.

The establishment of a communication structure in the college is of central importance; it allows information, ideas and attitudes to be shared rapidly and effectively. Derwentside College states that one of its long-term goals is to improve communication networks within the college.

Involving staff in developments

Colleges emphasised the need to involve as many staff as possible in development work and to ensure that outcomes are widely disseminated. To manage their involvement in an FEU project, Loxley College identified an in-house theme co-ordinator for each area of work, who then managed their theme on a cross-college basis. Bradford and Ilkley Community College used paired co-ordinators for each theme who met together under the guidance of the college's senior management team and worked with small groups of staff from across the college.

Accurate market information, the implementation of technical changes to the curriculum, improvements in the range of college services, the ability to respond quickly to demand and the assurance of quality are all necessary for survival.

Can appropriate, effective, and efficient organisational structures and systems for corporate colleges be identified and established, so that energy and attention are focused on the delivery of the service to learners?

Many colleges are reformulating and re-allocating management responsibility in order to meet the management demands of incorporation and current trends in curriculum and assessment. Several colleges are pushing operational responsibility 'downwards' or 'outwards' to operational managers at middle-manager level. This trend, together with financial pressures, is resulting in a significant reduction in the size of senior management teams and a corresponding increase of staff at lower levels of the management spine. As a result, principals are relying more and more on the advice of college governors and the services of freelance consultants.

There was thought to be an urgent need for staff development at middle-management level in such areas as staff motivation, problem solving, team building and resource management. With flatter management structures, the pressure at this level for attitudinal change and the need for a range of new skills are critical issues in quality improvement.

In the absence of LEA FE advisers, curriculum and staff development support, and local collaborative networks, will college staff get the kind of support they need to provide a quality service for learners and meet the demands of new initiatives in curriculum and qualifications?

Low staff morale

At some colleges the picture is one of suspicion that organisational development projects will lead to 'yet more change'. Some colleges recognise that they need to work on the serious and underlying effect of low self-esteem among the staff. For example, one college reported widespread distrust of the CMIS, which is perceived as a negative management tool by the staff who resent the resulting scrutiny of their work. As a consequence, the CMIS is not yet completely established, with much resulting scope for obfuscation and delay.

Colleges are examining existing systems, developing new systems and allocating new responsibilities in an attempt to find the most effective and efficient organisational structure. New responsibilities include:

- the finance function
- the personnel function
- MIS/information services management
- accommodation/estate management
- external contracts
- client services management
- quality assurance system co-ordination
- research and development
- adult access (especially for tertiary colleges which have previously focused attention on 16-19 year olds)
- community liaison/o leisure and recreation o HE-franchised provision

As one college pointed out, any new structure adopted by a college will depend on how it 'sees' segmentation of its market (e.g. by age group, by course type) and on historical factors.

Antagonism to change

Many colleges aspire to 'developmental change' as a continual and constructive process within the college culture. However, some colleges are overwhelmed by staff anxiety and 'destructive' trade union activities. As one

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Staff anxiety and 'destructive' trade union activities. As one college reported, 'Demands for communication, often used as a synonym for consultation and negotiation, may well have the ability to paralyse change processes completely, and cause colleges to atrophy, losing their avowed recognition of the need to be responsive and customer centred.'

'One-staff' philosophy

One college reported that the low level of understanding between teaching and support staff is a source of serious conflict. The college recognises that the impact of the changing balance means that a culture of parity of esteem must be developed.

At Gateshead College a cross-college group of teaching and support staff have set up a range of services including introductory modules and open days for adult learners. The formation and functioning of this group have improved communications and harnessed the expertise of different sections to set up new provision, improve recruitment and stagger enrolment. The experience has emphasised the need for a one staff philosophy, where all have important roles in curriculum and institutional development.

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Can the need for staff ownership of change be reconciled with the need for strong leadership and executive decision making?

Systems of internal resource allocation may exacerbate such 'sectional' tensions, and undermine the creation of a 'whole-college' culture. One college commented that its current resource model caused '*an element of suspicion and an unwillingness to be open about such things as student numbers, development of good practice, and departmental development. "Top-slicing" to pay for cross-college services is also likely to cause tensions. Another college commented on the importance of creating resourcing models which reward internal collaboration.*'

Ensuring staff involvement in strategic planning

Derwentside College tackled its mission statement by first arranging a one-day planning event outside the college, for all senior and middle management. They considered the process of planning, investigated mission statements, conducted a 'strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats' (SWOT) analysis of the college, and drafted a mission statement and a series of strategic issues facing the college. These were refined and discussed back in college, school and sector meetings, resulting in reports to the principal with general college and sector-specific objectives.

The benefits of devolving responsibility as close as possible to the 'point of delivery' and the potentially destructive consequences of competition between semi-autonomous units of staff, need to be counter-balanced by strong horizontal groupings across the college and by positive support for internal networking.

Whole-college approach to curriculum development

One college reported that it had changed its management structure in order to 'deliver a whole-college co-ordinated approach to curriculum development'. It was attempting to form a collective responsibility within the college (as opposed to a separation of responsibility between different levels within the organisation) by means of:

- an extensive use of teams, from strategic teams to staff course teams;
- networks that co-ordinate across the different levels within the organisation.

The college subsequently investigated the effectiveness of this first stage through structured interviews with staff, questionnaires and desk research. They found that the consultative process had enabled staff to reflect upon their own work and its significance to the development of the whole institution: it had ensured 'staff ownership' of the college aims and a sharing of values and goals. *'It was particularly noticeable that listening, dialogue and feedback were important to all staff.'*

Organisational reviews need to take time, so that a suitable culture can be established and staff can determine their own change process, as far as possible, and feel themselves to be in control. Some colleges are well down this path; others, perhaps where the need for change is greatest, are experiencing the punishing effects of tight deadlines.

One college emphasised the need to establish means of monitoring staff perceptions of the changes that are taking place. This was thought to be especially important in relation to quality development since negative feelings are very likely to develop if the initiatives are seen as being imposed from outside or 'top down'. Colleges need to 'empower' school and course teams to control, assure and manage the quality of the courses they provide; only then will staff see quality assurance as a way of telling students, employees, and other clients 'How good we are' rather than as a stick to control staff with.

Strong leadership

Darwentside College emphasised the importance of involving staff in the development of the college mission and strategic plan. However, the college also observed: '*Incorporation*

presents a major organisational change and time is short. Negotiation and consultation are not synonymous with democracy

Strong leadership and decision-making, which is crisp and responsive to the demands of the changing culture, will be required.

At a time of change, a strong corporate culture exhibited through strong and clear-sighted leadership may be essential. The experience gleaned from the project indicates that the strong leader is likely to have a clear vision and be a strategic thinker, ready to listen to and involve others, and to take decisive action reflecting that vision

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teaching and non-teaching, followed by a series of meetings in which the principal addresses groups of approximately 25 staff in greater detail.

Questions formulated by staff in small groups are also collated so that management can ensure that responses are made as informed decisions become known. It is hoped that at these mechanisms, together with an all-day 'whole-college' session on strategic issues, will result in all staff making a genuine contribution to the strategic policy and ethos.

When considering re-organisation, and making changes, colleges must take full account of the impact of transitional arrangements on the quality of service for learners.

With the loss of LEA PE advisers, curriculum and staff development support services, and the increased competition between providers, it will be important for colleges to find ways of participating in national and local networking, and maintaining the positive aspects of collaboration with other institutions.

Formalising the 'organisation development' function

'Organisation development' is given a significant place in Lowestoft College's organisational structure. This is indicative of the principal's belief that institutional development is a long-term activity and that institutional research must be formalised in order to assist in evaluation and to inform planning and policy. Few principals have yet made such a bold gesture internally although others have engaged outside consultants to act as catalysts in meeting their organisational development needs.

Independence, new responsibilities, changes to funding arrangements and developments in the curriculum mean that colleges need to ensure they have in place a range of cross-college services, e.g.:

- adult guidance on education and training or learner support

- learning resources

- professional development

- overseas liaison

- HE liaison

- industrial and commercial services

- APL preparation or action planning

It is not yet clear whether cross-college services are compatible with strong departmental structures. Moreover, current developments in curriculum (e.g. modularisation, GNVQ core skills) can be seen as eroding departmental boundaries. It seems that strong departmental structures work against the development of common systems and approaches across the college, although many larger colleges feel that departments (or faculties) are essential for clear lines of responsibility and ownership of the curriculum.

New senior management functions

New senior management cross-college functional roles are emerging to meet the needs of both the 'new curriculum' and incorporation.

Changes in management structures

Eastleigh College has indicated that its management structure will need to change as part of the incorporation process. Faculty heads will become operational managers, orchestrating review and evaluation, rather than gatekeepers for resources. The administrative posts of finance and resource

Flatter structures versus hierarchies of opportunity

Coleg Glan Hafren is organised on a modified departmental system which incorporates a number of cross-college posts and functions. College structures are evolving and the college will, in preparing for incorporation, review its organisational framework. However the principal does not believe that the advantages of flat structures outweigh the improved opportunities offered by an increased proportion of promoted posts. He sees the need for an 'improved hierarchy of opportunity' within the college. This may prove to be a sensible HRM strategy at a time when staff need to feel valued.

Derwentside College intends to maintain its current matrix management structure. The devolution of course management to the head-of-school level brings these managers more responsibility for curriculum and staff development. The roles of senior managers seem crucial given the required increased expertise in finance, personnel and premises. The committee structure and working groups in college are to be revised. Derwentside College's research has shown that the inter-relationship of teams, groups and committees needs to be mapped and staff made aware of these channels of communication.

officer, personnel manager and estates manager are being added to cross-college posts which already exist for staff development, curriculum development and marketing. This echoes additional roles being created by other colleges in the light of incorporation.

Several colleges have reported a re-formulation and re-allocation of functional responsibility at senior management level: operational responsibility is being pushed out to operational managers at faculty-head or middle-manager level, depending on the size of the college. There seems to be a general perception that functional responsibility at senior management level will provide the strong corporate management and framework for co-ordinated development which is needed by independent colleges and which in turn should result in increased efficiency and quality. This will need to be complemented by operational responsibility at faculty or middle-manager level, with resourcing and staffing decisions and responsibility for quality as close as possible to the point of delivery.

Vertical versus horizontal groupings

Although 'matrix'-type structures seem to lend themselves better to an integrated and consistent service for learners, it is difficult to eradicate the persistence of 'factional' or 'sectional' thinking. As one college reported, 'Factors that are inhibiting corporate management and successful co-ordination stem from factional thinking that causes people to create boundaries around what they do, in much the same way as departmental boundaries existed. Strategies for ensuring that networks genuinely run across the college are crucial.'

Although a few colleges

(usually the larger ones) see departments as essential for clear lines of responsibility and ownership of the curriculum, several commented on the potentially negative aspects of 'factional' or 'sectional' thinking, which persisted even within matrix structures.

One college commented on: *'The need to balance tension between stake holders in components of the college programme, and the prioritising that has to be done from a whole college view.'*

This tension can be destructive, leading to barriers and inefficiency, and can lead to alienation if sectional values are not sufficiently valued.'

Another observed: *'One of the few perceived weaknesses in our organisational structure is the current over-emphasis on the vertical lines of identity and communication at the expense of horizontal groupings. The team identity that has developed has been related to activity with a similar focus rather than one which forced relationships across roles and functions...it is apparent that we need some more formal horizontal groupings which have a limited life span and a specific focus.'*

Maintaining quality through change

One college admitted that *'We didn't realise, at the time of re-organisation, just how much potential muddle we exposed students to, as we merged differing administrative systems, without recognising their conflict.'*



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הנץ חם יתנו ז

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New internal resourcing systems

There is consensus that previous funding systems constrained progress towards greater flexibility, wider participation, and access to qualifications. It will be important not to re-introduce such constraints into the Further Education Funding Council's new funding system (e.g. definitions of full-time equivalents based on modes of attendance). Colleges generally recognise the need to bring together the curriculum and resource management functions of the college and to underpin these by a stronger use of targets and performance indicators.

Handsworth College is seeking to establish a resourcing model that supports flexible learning, a modularised curriculum and outcome-related funding. In the short term, they are developing expertise within the college to address this issue. The existing resourcing system has been adjusted so that each of the curriculum leaders now operates as a spending head for all resources.

Some colleges are exploring delegation of budgets to 'programme areas', with the intention of setting up service-level agreements between the programme areas and 'service units', including learning/learner support.

Is it advantageous for colleges to devise internal resource allocation systems which reflect external funding systems, i.e. demand-led; designed to encourage expansion, widen participation, increase the achievement of qualifications; tagg'd to explicit quality criteria?

Colleges need to find ways of ensuring that resourcing policy is driven by the college mission and curriculum, and not the reverse. *'The activity must generate the resource, not the other way round.'* (Llandrillo College)

Resourcing in a small college

One college reported that moving to a fully devolved budget was not a priority. It did not think there were sufficient support structures or staff development opportunities in a small college to warrant the move towards budget centre managers although schools would soon have responsibility for their share of the part-time budget, based on unit costing.

Colleges need flexible and efficient internal resourcing systems which support the college mission and reflect the need to maximise achievement. Some colleges in the project were exploring 'achievement-led' and 'demand-led' systems based on learning outcomes. Others were exploring activity-led systems in which resources follow learners. The identification and application of performance indicators for the full range of emerging college services was a priority for many.

Llandrillo College is building a new resourcing model:
'At Llandrillo the costing hierarchy appropriate to the organisational structure has now been in place: some two years (one full financial year). Even with one full financial

3.5

3.4

Year this information will be good enough to produce unit costs for the library.

admissions unit, student services and the academic cost centres ("schools").

Initially the costs will be course driven (i.e. based on student hours), until the coherent modular structure is in place.'

- analysing and comparing unit costs of programme areas and services;
- reviewing weightings to encourage participation by under-represented groups;
- establishing a costing methodology and pricing policy for college services, e.g. diagnostic assessment, guidance and action planning, assessment for NVQs;
- determining performance indicators in order to demonstrate that central services, funded by internal top-slicing, are operating within the same cost-effective parameters as other areas of provision.

Nelson and Colne College is investigating for future modelling, a process of allocating a "Base Rate" which will be piloted with additional top up given for value added in terms of completion, examinations, NVQ results, progression into HE or employment, etc. and conversely deductions made from drop out rates and failure to complete. Obviously this is a problematic area and much more research would be needed to develop strategies. It would also be an interesting exercise to attach a variable unit cost per student, and would require close monitoring' on the basis of the course they are following and have the money follow the student through the individual programme. This possibility needs very careful consideration and would require close monitoring.'

Colleges are generally aiming to widen access to learning and qualifications for a new range of clients in keeping with government policies. Can the barriers created by traditional external funding and internal resourcing systems be avoided in the future?

In order to widen participation, colleges will need to obtain and allocate funds to make appropriate and attractive provision for under-represented groups and provide the support services necessary for access, such as creches and adult guidance. This is likely to involve cross subsidies, efficiency gains and energetic income generation.

Colleges are accelerating the introduction of threshold services and will need information, from FEU and others, about how to pay for them. Given that the total budget for FE is unlikely to increase, what proportion of funds can colleges afford to transfer from teaching and learning to advice, counselling and APL?

Funding quality

Colleges are seeking to establish internal resource management models which are flexible, transparent and motivating, to enable tight curriculum planning against organisational priorities. They are exploring resourcing models which devolve negotiated budgets, linked to performance indicators, to programme areas or delivery units. In this way it is hoped to:

- relate resources to specific activities and needs;
- encourage and promote increased activity;
- improve and reward quality;
- ensure clearer lines of responsibility and accountability;
- ensure that curriculum initiatives reflect students' needs.

The advantages of delegated budgets and competitive semi-autonomous cost centres will have to be balanced against the need to top slice and cross-subsidise in order to implement the college mission; for example, provision of support services to enable access for particular groups in the community.

Can colleges accurately cost, price (and resource) a full range of services, in line with current developments in:

- qualifications (e.g. NVQs, APL, work-based assessment);
- publicly funded training schemes (e.g. Training Credits, Action Planning, Adult Guidance vouchers);
- the need to collaborate (e.g. franchising contracts)?

One college commented, 'The idea that we can relocate funds via efficiency savings is hardly realistic, given the state of many college buildings and the desperate need for staff development. The cutting of existing faculty course budgets, and the introduction of a bidding system for developments within certain earmarked criteria, can be counterproductive if perceived as a reduction in the teams' autonomy to improve the quality of its provision. Such targeted development needs to be accompanied by an overall increase in resources and it would be helpful if the inspectorate would comment on the adequacy of funding within the sector. Quality does cost.'

Few colleges currently have accurate information about the various costs of provision but they do need to be able to measure the true cost of quality provision and to delineate areas of relative risk. Colleges need therefore to develop systems for measuring outputs against inputs in terms of cost benefit.

Resourcing new services

At one college the cost of the guidance and registry function is now expressed per FTE student.

At one college the cost of the guidance and registry function is now expressed per FTE student.

Colleges are being pressured to prioritise income generating activity and to match resource allocations to market requirements in the more competitive environment.

In trying to fund key functions previously performed by the LEAs, colleges are facing new kinds of decisions. They must, for example, decide on the proportion of income which can be spent on provision, in order to leave sufficient funding to support the administrative and educational infrastructure, and produce investment and development capital.

Resourcing the flexible college

A problem for most colleges is how to resource flexible, student-centred learning. Coleg Glyn Hafren feels that

more work needs to be done on the best approach to resourcing self-managed learning. They identify this as a key issue under new funding arrangements.

Colleges need to find funds for product development and quality improvement. College managers face the challenge of managing existing programmes efficiently enough to release funds for future developments.

In order to increase income-generating activity, colleges need to develop a pricing strategy which is client rather than course based. Accurate costing (and competitive pricing) of a full range of learning and assessment services will gain colleges maximum access to external funds, e.g. publicly funded schemes administered by Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs).

Are there blocks to effective collaborative arrangements between FE colleges, schools and HE institutions arising from existing and emerging funding arrangements?

It is necessary to deploy resources (including staffing and accommodation) in new ways in order to support the development and delivery of flexible and accessible provision, e.g. threshold services, modularised curriculum, learning resource facilities.

Colleges are finding their existing CMSs inadequate and are working towards their own solutions or buying them in. To avoid unnecessary waste of public funds, could common national specifications (for system and software) be commissioned to meet the needs of incorporated FE colleges and the accounting/monitoring requirements of FEFC and TECs? This would involve collaboration between FEFC and the Employment Department.

Balancing budget and mission

'An unfortunate consequence of reduced income to the college is the increased need to generate more income from our trading enterprises. Such pressures may operate in direct opposition to educational requirements by reducing diversity of produce, limiting student involvement and discouraging experimentation. College management is fully aware of the dangers inherent in such trends and will continue to resist undeliverable pressures.'

Culture shift

Colleges face limits to their income-generating activity and potential for expansion because of the physical limitations inherent in their buildings and equipment. It will be necessary to monitor the use of existing buildings strictly and to investigate selling some existing college sites in order to improve present facilities or acquire new ones. Collaborative arrangements with other providers may be another option.

It is apparent that massive shifts in staff attitudes will be required to meet the demands of the new sector. Derwentside College observed, 'incorporation has placed great demands for changes in the working practices of teaching and support staff in college. This statement perhaps underpins the need for a "one staff" philosophy, where all have important roles in curriculum and institutional development.'

Accommodation constraints

Accommodation availability would seem to be a major factor currently constraining development. In order to ease the situation, Newark and Sherwood College has moved towards central timetabling, unified hourly periods and staggered lunch hours. There has been an attempt to reduce the number of specialist rooms and rooms which are rarely used have been refurbished to provide greater versatility.

With the loss of LEA support to colleges (from officers, advisers and curriculum development units), how can 'neutral' (disinterested) and informed advice and support best be provided in the future? Will colleges be able to afford to 'buy it in'? Will college managers invest, sufficiently, in curriculum advice? What will be the consequences for quality of the end of 'tree-trade' networking and an increased dependency on freelance consultants and income-generating agencies?

Colleges need appropriate CMIS which meet both FEFC and TEC requirements and are compatible with both systems. Such packages do not yet seem to be available.

New college CMIS and accounting systems are needed to facilitate linking resources to individual student activity including use of college facilities and services, individual progress and achievement at the level of NVQ or GNVQ units and elements.

Income targets

Nelson and Coole College is examining the possibility of setting targets for individual faculties. This may be in terms of the money which would be generated in fees, full-cost course lettings, sponsorship.

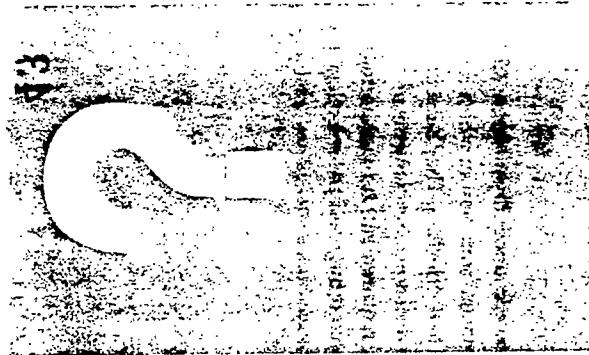
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Colleges need a comprehensive computer-based accounting and financial administration package which will provide budgetary control and facilitate a strict cash-flow policy.

student numbers, etc., as well as income from specific commercial activities such as the public Hairdressing Salon, or Training Restaurant, plus an investigation of where it is appropriate to consider providing open access workshops.



Colleges generally need a far more effective and accessible level of integrated information throughout the institution, which members of staff at all levels can use with confidence. Students will also need access to some aspects of the system, e.g. individual records of achievement, personal training credit accounts.

New requirements for CMIS

Llandrillo College has a created a technology workshop on site, administered through its own

CMIS. This system covers registration, staff-student ratios, class lists, etc., and also tracks learners and enables self-tracking.

Colleges Glyn Hatren identified the need for a comprehensive accounting and financial package and set itself a target date of September 1992 for its acquisition.

Colleges are reviewing staff roles, job descriptions and conditions of service in the light of the new modes of delivery, the new range of services provided by colleges and their new independence.

Conventional distinctions between academic and support staff are problematic in the light of the new range of services provided by colleges.

New functions in relation to finance, buildings, personnel and data processing need to be delineated and allocated appropriately within college organisational structures.

Incorporation implies the need for a new accountability affecting all staff. Staff need to understand the external environment in which the college is operating, the college mission and priorities. They need to understand the resource implications of decisions, the elements of budgetary control and to respond to the requirements for monitoring information for quality assurance and accounting. As Loxley College put it, '*All staff should know what it costs to educate/train a student and what it costs to lose them.*'

College managers are seeking to bring about a culture change amongst staff, in order to harness the college resource fully. '*They're not all aware of how they can contribute to the college success.*'

In order to meet the quality-assurance requirements for the delivery of NVQs and GNVQs, college staff will need to be trained and accredited as assessors, internal verifiers and APL advisers. This represents a new and significant cost for colleges.

Devolving budgetary responsibility for all elements of course provision, including the deployment of teaching and support staff, to middle managers will have considerable implications for their professional development.

Incorporation seems to have legitimised management control systems which could be considered intrusive by staff, for example much more detailed breakdown of information from teaching sections/divisions to establish accurate unit costs and/or the introduction of quality mechanisms, in top-down mode, for speed. The resentment felt by some staff may interfere with the effective running of the college.

Colleges are increasingly viewing themselves as self-reflective, self-critical institutions, with research and development central to institutional development and well-being.

Strategic quality management

Colleges need to find time to develop an incremental approach to quality. This means devising and implementing coherent and carefully paced strategies that establish quality as everyone's responsibility.

One college described its 'strategic quality management approach' as follows:

To achieve the highest quality in its work, the college:

- regularly seeks the views of clients;
- continuously monitors its work by using statistical data, devising quality circles and setting realistic targets;
- has received a commitment from governors and the Senior management group that action to improve quality will receive priority and that adequate resources will be made available.

Services development board
One college has a 'services development board' which leads the development of policy and processes, reviews and evaluates and maintains service quality improvement.

Colleges need to evaluate existing quality systems and use root cause analysis to inform them about the nature of and reasons for any shortfalls in existing mechanisms before deciding on any new approach.

Senior management commitment, visible leadership and the commitment and support of governors are crucial to any substantial change. How can colleges most effectively address the full management, at all levels and across all functions, of the inputs, people processes and outcomes associated with all college activities?

The creation of an appropriate culture, based on an established, shared and maintained vision and values, is essential if quality improvement is to be embedded with everyone working in the same direction towards common goals. Senior manager involvement is also essential.

'We are concerned to promote quality assurance systems that support individual learners and the staff who assist them.

Quality for the individual learner will always be about their day-to-day experiences, and the way in which their learning is supported and managed by the staff they come into contact with.'

'The tendency to view managing the educative process and managing human, physical and financial processes as separate and unconnected areas of activity needs to be combatted.

Developing appropriate performance indicators

At Barnet College, support areas are being asked to develop appropriate performance indicators relating to the objectives of each Area Development Plan. In some areas, there is little previous practice on which to draw.

Nelson and Colne College drew attention to the need for performance indicators, which take account of the fact that adults' lives are frequently disrupted. As a consequence, drop-out rates will not necessarily convey an accurate picture of a particular course's outcomes.

- means for establishing measures for standards;
- a methodology for measuring the degree to which standards are met, reporting findings and their subsequent use to bring about improvements.

There is much concern over the need to link quality to resourcing. What role might the establishment of a college research and development function play in co-ordinating and initiating institutional research and development on quality issues and in creating a relationship between resourcing, strategic planning and quality?

Colleges are enthusiastic about student charters and entitlements but these should not be confused with standards. Charters are the starting point rather than the end point. Service standards are needed to demonstrate the extent to which charters are being fulfilled.

The following are still undeveloped:

- means for establishing measures for standards;
- a methodology for measuring the degree to which standards are met, reporting findings and their subsequent use to bring about improvements.

Nelson and Colne College also observed that determining quality standards for support mechanisms is problematical, as there is no quantifiable data likely to emerge from support activities.

Quality drivers

Job satisfaction and individual responsibility for quality were linked by colleges. On a practical level this might include, for example, 'statements of achievement for course teams or staff, set against previous expectations', and 'statements from course teams or staff which indicate an awareness of the "quality drivers" to which they are working'.

Colleges are espousing the terminology of total quality management (TQM), but as yet there is very little evidence of espousal of the conditions for and of such an approach (this is understandable given the time needed for such an approach). There is still confusion over the terminology and activities perceived to represent the principles and practices of TQM. There is little understanding of the need to measure and track activities, improve infrastructure or test improvement activities in controlled circumstances before decisions are made whether to continue or to spread the practice wider.

Should quality standards in a college be market or education driven? What is an appropriate balance between the two forces?

There is a clear need to provide targets for improving levels of access and participation in local and national communities, and for measuring performance against targets.

There is confusion about terminology in relation to performance indicators. Corporate performance indicators which help to determine local or functional indicators should be a priority.

Tensions and paradoxes

Colleges were concerned about consistency between agendas:

'When curriculum team leaders were approached with reference to quality assurance procedures, all agreed that

Indicators of responsiveness

A range of performance indicators are used by Nelson and Colne College to evaluate the responsiveness of the college to local need and the extent to which the Statement of Purpose is being met. This includes monitoring of application and enrolment rates from feeder schools and, as part of a recent initiative for part-time courses, by postcode area, cross referenced to borough boundaries, ward boundaries, unemployment statistics, local housing authority estate maps and postcode maps showing numbers of residential and industrial properties. Other performance indicators used include examination pass rates, early leaver statistics, destination statistics, work experience reports and profiling.

standardised procedures would provide both a focus for quality overview and a methodology for providing evidence to external sources (e.g. BTEC Moderators), so that quality issues were to the fore in programme coordination. Nevertheless, there was still some concern that the definition of acceptable quality procedures might differ from one agency to another and that there was therefore a need to ensure that the procedures did not become an end in themselves, but a means to the continuing improvement of the quality of service offered by the college.

The processes that deliver the curriculum and services should be kept under regular review.

The processes that deliver the curriculum and services should be kept under regular review.

Quality procedures and instruments themselves should be kept under regular review.

How can external performance indicators, based on an outmoded curriculum model and a partial view of the work undertaken by colleges, be changed to support colleges' attempts to widen access by the expansion of flexible learning, APL, NVQ assessment and other activities?

Several respondents referred to the tension between expanding provision and maintaining quality — one referred to the "open access versus quality paradox".

Colleges need help in developing measures of 'value added' and in using MIS as part of this process. Data collection is not an end in itself.

Institutional quality development programmes

Colleges reported a need for more visible, pro-active (and resource consuming!) institutional quality development programmes, the establishment of a function for institutional research and development to co-ordinate and initiate institutional research on quality issues, a cross-institutional support function responsible for the review and evaluation process.

Defining value added

One college commented that in the context of the closer scrutiny now being given to 'course hours' and individual learning programmes, an agreed definition of 'value added' might enable both learners and providers to get the best out of the system.

Quality systems can easily become over-bureaucratized and an end in themselves. An ethos needs to be created that enables quality objectives and planning to be integrated into the college's activities rather than 'bolted on'.

What might be the customer's/learner's role in quality in FE? How might this be encouraged/implemented?

Not all colleges have grasped the full implications of staff attitudes toward change. Raising the awareness of all staff should be a priority. The move to incorporation should make this easier, as everyone can see clear, external reasons, for an emphasis on quality.

Equality

At Newark and Sherwood College equality is seen as an essential ingredient of quality. TQM can only be achieved with the inclusion of established procedures and

Quality project

Newark and Sherwood college appointed a Quality Manager in September 1991 through funding from the North Nottinghamshire TEC. This enabled the college to participate in a one-year pilot project along with other colleges. The remit for this project was to improve institutional quality and network good quality practices with other participating colleges. The role of the Quality Manager is to raise awareness of developments in this area and work with course teams to embed and enhance quality systems. The Quality Manager reports regularly to the Academic Board and Directorate.

practices which take account of individual needs and provide an ethos and environment where all staff and students are welcomed, valued and respected.

For performance indicators to be meaningful, they must operate at a very low level of aggregation within the organisation. They must also be indicators only, triggering investigation of whether the initial indication is cause for concern. The root cause then needs to be identified to avoid spending resources on the wrong element of the problem.

What performance indicators are appropriate for measuring the quality of non-traditional student learning activity?

adults

Adult learner profile

Gateshead College has identified the data required to profile their adult learners, as follows:

- numbers;
- gender, age, ethnicity;
- those in receipt of LEA fees remission, i.e. receiving unemployment benefit, family credit, etc;
- home address by local area.

These data are used in programme review and evaluation processes and when planning new programmes, to:

- identify gaps in provision;
- identify groups who are not participating.

One of the main challenges of increasing participation by adults in further education and training is the cost of such provision.

Colleges are encountering great difficulties in expanding access for adults because public funding is inadequate. For example, colleges reported the inability of available LEA discretionary grant funds to meet local demand. Moreover, the regulations governing support for adults are often inconsistent. There are, for example, significant anomalies between the principles governing DSS and LEA support for adults.

Balancing priorities

As a tertiary college, Nelson and Colne College commented on 'The difficulty of integrating adult courses into an A-level blocked timetable, especially when our adults do not wish to attend outside the hours of 9.15a.m. and 3.00p.m.'

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Availability for work

A number of colleges commented on the negative effects of government policy on adult learning. By adopting an extreme and inflexible interpretation of the 'availability

The current review of learners' entitlement to benefit is to be welcomed. What further steps can be taken to ensure that those wishing to undertake education and training are not at a financial disadvantage compared with others who are unemployed?

There is apprehension over the future scale of LEA-funded provision for adults and the costs to users, which may be prohibitive.

for work clause' some DSS offices are obliging adults to take temporary, low paid work, thereby undermining their attendance at college and achievement of qualifications.

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If the context of buoyant enrolments by 16-19 year-olds on full-time courses, it will be important for colleges to consider their responsibilities in relation to the provision of further education and training for adults.

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Where part-time teachers are assigned to provision targeted at part-time adult students, there can be a coincidence of powerlessness. This can result in both students and staff missing out on college support systems for guidance, social and practical concerns, as these are designed primarily to meet the needs of full-time students and staff. Colleges can combat this by creating flexible access to their services, including learner support and staff development designed with part-time learners in mind.

Adult support questionnaire
At Nelson and Colne college, a questionnaire was developed to ascertain student and staff perceptions of the support given to adult students, e.g. individual counselling (advice given to students prior their enrolling on any college programme), advice on funding and maintenance grants, the availability of childcare facilities and the provision of learning resource areas and support outside the normal class contact provision.

Access and progression

The adult education part time programme at Barnet College has been categorised into subject areas, and for each course, statements of competencies and skill levels are being developed. These will then inform a process by which the entire course offer of full time and part time provision will be organised into progression routes to assist the students in having easier access to a wider variety of provision

A national culture has yet to be established in which adults are encouraged to evaluate their career pathways and learning needs on a continuous basis.

Adult student perceptions
One college reported undertaking a study of adult student perceptions of the effectiveness of student guidance and support mechanisms, and the barriers to adult entry and progression.

Increasing participation in further education and training by adults is expensive in terms of the associated costs, e.g. the need to provide childcare facilities and an advice and action planning service. How can the deployment of available public funds best be organised and co-ordinated?

Adults need more information, before they come to college, on costs, benefits and the perceptions and experiences of other students. They also tend to need more support at the threshold (e.g. initial diagnostic assessment) and more support while they are at college than 16-19s.

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When questioned towards the end of their course, adult learners at Derwentside College were said to have valued a 'relaxed atmosphere and 'group work', enjoyed the variety of teaching methods they had encountered but wanted a generous dose of traditional instruction as well!

It will be important for colleges to continue to address the distinctive needs of adult learners rather than assume that flexible structures are all that are needed.

Colleges need to establish an adult learning environment. This can be done through defining appropriate values and culture and addressing practical issues, such as the provision of car parks, crèche facilities and quiet study areas.

Some colleges are involving adult students in defining what is needed and in planning the developments. That involvement, in itself, should be a useful contribution to the establishment of an adult environment.

It is recognised by staff and younger students that the contribution of the adults to the group is very valuable. Their mature approach, their participation, which often draws on their personal life experiences and their determination, influences younger students.

It is in the area of teaching and learning that they demonstrate:

- their initial need for more direct teaching and a reluctance to move towards other learning strategies;
- their need for more individual attention;
- their need for commitment from staff;
- their need to identify assessment strategies clearly;
- their need for parity of esteem;
- their need for a more informal atmosphere in a suitably mature environment

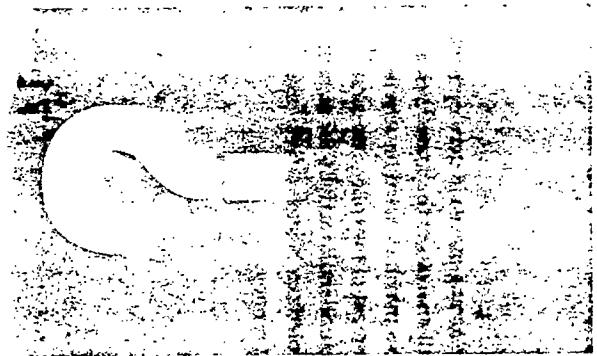
What can colleges do to ensure that the needs of both full-time 16-19 year olds and adults, frequently attending part-time, are met in a way that encourages high rates of participation by all sections of the community and supports maximum achievement by each individual?

Newark and Sherwood College reflected that 'The present situation often brings together a wide age range of students in any one group. For the adults this can initially pose certain problems. They can:

- lack confidence;
- over compensate for their perceived inferior ability

The identification of 'quality indicators' for adult provision is likely to raise staff awareness of the distinctive needs of adults.

Adult students' demands for traditional teaching methods can easily be dismissed for ideological reasons. In an age when flexible opportunities can be finance driven and adult students may be detached from essential teacher support more than they would like, it is especially important to listen to such demands. After full discussion, they may be moderated to a better understood version of the negotiated approach to preferred teaching and learning styles.



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STAN CAMP, 1978

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The benefits

Lowestoft College re-affirmed its commitment to collaboration. At a time when many others in the sector fear that collaboration may be difficult to sustain, the college sees strength in ensuring that progression and achievement routes are clear. This cannot be achieved in a vacuum: it requires close liaison with schools and HE institutions, at least. At best, the opportunity can be taken to forge and test more pro-active collaboration leading to compact-style arrangements.

All colleges within the project were engaged in some measure of collaboration but the extent to which their arrangements are planned and resourced, varies considerably. Where a college's mission statement and its collaborative activities are clearly related, there is more likely to be appropriate resourcing, planning, and quality control.

Reaseheath College observed that collaboration with industry underpins a great deal of their work and enriches the curriculum offer as well as ensuring that staff are kept up to date with leading-edge developments.

The Isle of Wight College sees collaborative arrangements with schools and the HE sector as an important contribution to their college mission regarding increased staying-on and participation rates.

What factors must individual colleges take into account when deciding on their policy for collaboration? For some, geography and their distance from potential competitors will be key. To what extent should individual colleges collaborate in a competitive market and in relation to which groups of learners?

Identifying the position of collaborative arrangements in development plans may be dependent on a cost-benefit analysis of the shared venture. Without such analysis, valuable resources may be wasted on activity which does not contribute to the achievement of the college mission. Colleges may take a strategic decision to undertake activity for reasons other than returns in cash or kind but a plethora of such activity may prove to be wasteful of time, energy and money.

Appropriate performance indicators for this area have proved elusive but remain vital to establishing the effectiveness of collaborative arrangements.

The difficulties

The costs to potential learners, existing learners and colleges, of not collaborating with other organisations, should be assessed.

One college saw the dangers of the complexities of existing frameworks which can lead to duplication and fragmentation.

Another identified the scarcity of mechanisms for cross-sector collaboration. Differences in both academic and accounting practices can make such work difficult.

Given the aim of the service to increase staying-on rates and participation both at 16 and at 18 plus, this is an important factor.

How can decisions about collaboration be informed by a cost-benefit analysis that also assesses the costs of not collaborating?

Collaborative arrangements with higher education are likely to blur demarcation between the sectors further. While this may result in a better deal for the learner as entry to HE becomes broader, more accessible and possibly more achievable, there are problems associated with the quality of both learning programmes and learning resources.

What quality standards and indicators are appropriate for the assessment of collaborative activities and how can they be integrated into overall quality management?

Colleges wanted information and advice on the curricular, organisational and resource implications of integrating franchising arrangements with HE into strategic planning, for example.

Derwentside College observed that some working practices of lecturing and support staff may be inconsistent with the demands on a college post incorporation, particularly in relation to collaborative activities. A 'one-staff' policy will be needed, where all have important roles in curriculum and institutional development.

Managing a strategic approach

FE lecturers may be unsure of the level and complexity of their new HE work and require support from their HE colleagues. There was a marked contrast between the support offered to FE from HE and the quite significant support offered by FE to the schools sector in comparable situations.

The sectors hold different concepts of what constitutes quality. An appreciation of the quality requirements of the respective partners and measures for their maintenance and improvement, should be built into all shared learning programmes.

The Isle of Wight College's re-organised structure is beginning to support their new HE work but has highlighted the need for different types of posts, such as a dedicated HE administrator.

Derwentside College has established and maintained joint curriculum development groups with its feeder schools. Although pump-priming funding for these groups has ceased, some of them continue as powerful self-help groups which contribute effectively to curriculum transition.

Where collaborative arrangements involve joint curriculum delivery, particularly with younger learners, there are often cultural differences which need to be resolved.

How can the ongoing movement between various aspects of a learning programme best be managed?

Harlow College have a college-wide team of 'client managers' with individual responsibility for monitoring and developing named collaborative links.

Relationships and common working arrangements developed under the

Training and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) will not necessarily

be maintained once funding from central sources ceases. The important

phase of embedding these practices is now evident. Schools and colleges

should be encouraged to examine the practices and expertise they have

built up and make decisions about their future resourcing and deployment.

Managing employer liaison

Co-ordination and management of employer liaison were undertaken in a variety of ways: through the head of the Enterprise Unit who was a member of the Chamber of Commerce (Filton); via existing sector compacts (Handsworth); through 'client managers' with clearly defined roles and case loads (Harlow and Gateshead) and through re-organisation of the college so that each sector head had responsibility for marketing and liaison in ways they felt most appropriate (Lewisham).

Both colleges and schools see collaboration as desirable but increasingly constrained budgets may mean that both need to be persuaded that this is an essential part of transition to further education and training for many young people. It is difficult to see how the provision of guidance and the planning of progression can take place effectively without planned collaboration between the phases.

Collaborative planning processes for effective transition from school to college are currently at risk. The need to maintain and develop such arrangements will become increasingly urgent as the National Curriculum becomes embedded and attainment information more available. External support must be seriously considered and the continued role of the LEA as a partner in the planning of transition supported. Voluntarism alone may not be sufficient.

The focus of activity

Collaborative arrangements operate along a continuum of commitment. This may involve:

- joint provision of learning programmes and/or common services;
- jointly owned staff;
- collaborative funding bids, task consortia, joint planning, joint activities, shared plan and/or provision of services, shared information

How can colleges establish and maintain an effective relationship with their local TEC(s) which will benefit learners and the local economy? What type of collaborative activities best promote partnership?

Handsworth College set up collaboration on Records of Achievement (ROA), curriculum mapping in relation to Key Stage 4 and NVQs. Lewisham was using existing collaborative arrangements as a basis for franchising. Other colleges are working on joint planning and delivery of programmes.

Continued joint planning with LEAs was being tackled by an academic development group and a resources group for post-16 provision with representation from four colleges, a joint planning group for FE with college representation. Two colleges referred to designated staff for liaison with TECs, the director of studies at one and a TEC and industry liaison officer at another.

What encouragement can be given by external agencies, such as FEFC, to the use of common systems of recording and reviewing, which facilitate coherence and maximise the benefit of such programmes?

How are staff best supported in adapting to their new roles in relation to a college's collaborative activities?

Access to FE for some learners with special needs is dependent upon close collaboration between education, health and social services; college need to find ways of ensuring that such arrangements do not fall away as the LEA's role in joint planning diminishes.

Joint projects

Three colleges gave examples of active involvement in joint projects: Investors in People (Tresham and Lewisham); City Challenge, school and training 'Roadways' initiatives (Lewisham); APL (Tresham).

Collaborative arrangements may broaden the base of smaller or specialist colleges or they may enable joint provision of costly services such as APL and guidance.

Adult education links

There were few mentions of adult education links in this theme, though there were many examples of activities under the Adult theme.

Nelson and Colne was involved in collaboration through the local Open College Network; Lewisham planned to build on schemes that had been developed collaboratively and to franchise provision to the Adult Services.

If collaboration does not take place, what effect may that have on the services in that locality?

Shared staffing arrangements may be desirable for supporting collaboration but they have implications for conditions of service. Problems should not be seen as insurmountable, however, particularly as in the new sector, local conditions of service may allow for greater flexibility. Smaller, specialist colleges may offer useful models.

Collaborative arrangements need to be managed — planned, resourced, monitored, evaluated and reviewed — if potential benefits are to be realised. It is essential to clarify the purpose of the arrangements and to ensure that members show a common understanding of their respective contributions. Issues such as the locus of power, accountability and responsibility must be agreed and communicated to those who need to know.

Links with Health and Social Services, voluntary and community groups were strong in some colleges. They included links with community groups, particularly in adult education, special needs and care, for example:

- a jointly provided pre-school play group course, NVQs for social services, a jointly funded and managed creche at Isle of Wight College;
- a TEC/IED-funded project involving community and voluntary groups at Handsworth;
- an access-to-FE joint venture with the college providing vocational modules for staff from a day centre at Eastleigh. For one college the Health Service was the largest employer with whom they dealt.

To what extent should certain types of inter-institutional collaboration be incorporated in a learners' charter?
What mechanisms can be used for the identification of mutual benefits by clusters of partner institutions?

Are there key areas of collaboration which should be specifically funded?

Using the whole resource

Colleges are recognising that access cannot be significantly extended by means of 'bolt-on' flexible provision. Instead it will be necessary for colleges to use their whole resource differently, to provide a flexible curriculum accessible in a many different ways.

- supported by a comprehensive range of new services. For example, Kingsway College aims to 'move a significant proportion of the college's work into more flexible modes of delivery so that more students can achieve success in more self-directed ways and resource utilisation can be maximised.'

Project colleges identified various motives for increasing flexibility including:

- the perception that the economic survival of colleges now depends on their ability to cope with (or exploit) a powerful set of new development, pushing them away from a model of provision consisting of homogeneous groups of students on linear 'taught' courses;
- the need to utilise available resources better, while at the same time widening access and increasing achievement;
- the need to be more responsive in meeting the requirements of external funding agencies and fee payers in a competitive market.

It seems that the kinds of services required for flexible access may demand a cross-college approach for reasons of coherence and comprehensibility for users, and economy for the college. Will this cause difficulties for larger colleges which operate through semi-autonomous departments?

Llandrillo College has set itself the target of modularising its entire curriculum by September 1993. This has necessitated substantial associated development in the areas of MIS, administrative systems, student guidance systems, use of accommodation, staffing arrangements, staff development and learning resources. A fundamental curricular aim of the college is to remove barriers to access.

Decomposing flexible is an aspiration shared by most colleges although use of the FEU Flexible College audit has revealed that a relatively low proportion of students are actually gaining flexible access to learning in a flexible environment at the present time.

Modularisation of the curriculum is generally seen as a key aspect of flexible access but the practical difficulties of implementing modular curricula are considerable. They include managing the organisational implications of individual modular portfolios which span departments, managing student tracking, working with existing internal resource systems, recording individuals' achievement of units.

Llandrillo College will increase reliance on a modular curriculum, which is accessible to all clients, allowing roll-on/roll-off, APL, and providing the framework for the development of a credit based

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Increased flexibility and access to accreditation and transfer is being undermined by curriculum developments which seem to indicate a trend away from student-centred learning. This is evidenced by recent restrictions on course work in GCSE and A level, and the requirement for external assessment in GNVQs.

Quality and flexibility

Some colleges are using target setting and review to drive change and ensure quality. For example,

Gateshead College aims to incorporate flexibility targets into the course review system and to develop appropriate review mechanisms for modular (as opposed to grouped subject) provision.

The college also reported that one of the more interesting issues to have arisen is the potential gap between what is really happening (or not), as opposed to what senior management might think is happening within the curriculum.

'This project has highlighted the need for much greater curriculum review at various junctions within a programme calendar in order to bridge the gap.'

system. Student-centred learning cannot be cost effective, unless flexible and resource based learning becomes an increasingly important part of student time.

Gateshead College reported that, *'The modularisation of the whole curriculum, inspired by the demands of NVQs and GNVQs, should act as the major catalyst for organisational change in the near future. A rethink on how human resources are structured and applied might need to be considered, while different capital resourcing models might also need re-examination.'*

Resourcing flexibility

The interest of external funding agencies in funding by outcomes, and in systems whereby resources follow learners, is mirrored by colleges' consideration of their own systems for internal resource allocation. Project colleges expressed interest in achievement-led resourcing (provided that workable definitions of 'value added' are built in) and are concerned to learn about such developments. However, most colleges are awaiting information from FEFC about the model of funding to be adopted, before they make radical changes to their internal systems

Colleges seeking to extend flexible access are becoming increasingly impatient with existing resourcing systems (both internal and external) which were designed for a different kind of service. Project colleges expressed the hope that the FEFC would not perpetuate previous approaches which have hindered the extension of flexible access.

What management and staff structure will serve to promote a cross-college approach to implementing flexible access and delivery challenges and conventional organisational structures and the traditional delineation of work roles?

The fact that traditional college, LEA and DFE performance indicators and statistical returns assume a course-based organisation of provision, had constrained change towards greater flexibility. Moreover, since the wrong questions were being asked, the data produced would be increasingly inaccurate or irrelevant.

At Barnet College, funds are allocated to individual learners in the case of the flexistudy programme which accounts for about 250 learners. A voucher system is operated for the Maths workshop.

Colleges are concerned to develop new internal resourcing systems which encourage flexible access and achievement. Many colleges recognise that their internal systems are under-developed or inappropriate, and have begun work on:

- developing mechanisms to monitor and record take up of learning support, and the use of college services and facilities;
- producing a costing and pricing policy for learner services;
- developing strategies which enable a full range of learner services to be introduced, alongside existing course-based provision;
- developing mechanisms which can cost and price flexible provision;
- developing a flexible pricing strategy which is client rather than course based;
- consideration of the accommodation implications of changes to curriculum and services.

Flexible organisational structures

Colleges urgently need more appropriate MIS systems able to track individual learning programmes (especially within modular or unit-based programmes) and take up of the whole range of non-traditional learning activity, including use of learning and learner support services.

One college considered that implementing change, and in particular increasing the flexibility of access to learning and assessment, would be very difficult to achieve with a strong 'robber baron' departmental structure.

'A flexible organisation which can 'bend' to new demands arising from within, or external to the organisation is preferred to a strong system of internal walls and barriers. Our current programme director organisation may not encourage the bridging of the vocational academic divide as different directors are responsible for different programmes. Perhaps we need directors to be managers of a student cohort? Flexible learning approaches highlight the need for integration of all roles and responsibilities of all staff.'

Gateshead College has included amongst its four strategic priorities, the development of a comprehensive range of flexible client-centred services. This involves the development of a new style of provision for adult learners (i.e. not course based), which embodies aspects of flexibility, involves new registration and tracking systems and which is supported by appropriate resourcing models (based on individual learners) and appropriate performance indicators/ performance standards.

Will the introduction of unit-based GNVQs assist colleges to modularise their curriculum offer? Will GNVQs accelerate progress toward flexibility in colleges?

flexible colleges

Bradford and Ilkley Community College comments on the need to conduct a review of weightings, both for a 'terminal' mode 'inc subject. In order to increase the incentive to departments to be more flexible in their recruitment strategies, the college is also addressing the need to consider accommodation implication by determining a longer term estate management strategy, as a necessary supporting feature of the academic planning process, encompassing both curriculum and pedagogical needs'.

The interplay between financial considerations and the curriculum will need to be carefully monitored in terms of the consequences for learners.

Keeping track

Llandrillo College is using FEU's *Flexible Colleges* to undertake:

- a review of college CMIS, in order to develop administrative and recording procedures that are not hostile to flexible delivery (by September 1993);
- an action plan for modularisation;
- the costing by small units of delivery, eventually modules;
- the monitoring of developments on achievement-led resourcing:

How can the necessary synergy between developments in curriculum, internal systems, and resourcing be achieved in order to move the college into full flexibility?

- the development of new systems for tracking student attendance and progress;
- the development of a new college timetable structure;

Encouraging flexibility

Kingsway College includes within its key success factors, the objective 'to devise and operate a new system of internal resource allocation in order to provide a steer to maximise student numbers, improve efficiency in use of resources, and improve quality'.

Colleges are encountering difficulty in defining, developing and providing the range of services necessary to support flexible learning and access to assessment. Difficulties include:

- What needs to be provided?
- Who should provide them?
- How much will they/should they cost?
- How should they be paid for?
- Where should they be provided?

A vocational matrix

In reviewing its curriculum entitlement, Newark and Sherwood college identify areas for improvement. In particular, the college wishes to widen access and increase participation.

The vocational matrix is a college-wide offering of vocational courses and modules from which the client will be able to choose (with appropriate guidance and support) on a mix and match basis. In deciding what modules to offer, those which lead to a nationally recognised qualification and further study will take preference. Where appropriate, students will be encouraged to sample as many different options as possible before selecting their individualised programme. It is envisaged that students will infill into modules/courses and be offered basic skills development in a discrete group.

Establishing APL

Bradford and Ilkley Community College is currently conducting a pilot programme on APEL in each of the college's five main areas of study. A cross-college working group has been established and a series of workshops held resulting in the identification of key issues, including:

- the cost of implementing APL and APEL, and the need to balance this against fee structures;
- the nature of the necessary administration system;
- the need for assessor training;
- the nature of the student guidance and support services needed.

The cross-college working group will make recommendations on the implications of APL/APEL for costing and pricing, quality assurance systems, staffing and curriculum design.

Another college reported that it is considering whether support services should be costed into 'course' operations, or brought in by 'course teams', *i.e. either case, their effectiveness would need to be demonstrated by improved achievement of learners.*

Llandrillo College is addressing the need to develop a unit-costing approach linked to the implementation of a fully modularised curriculum as a step towards achievement-led resourcing. It comments 'From a curriculum management point of view, it is clear that the only system likely to encourage flexibility and maximise the usage of modular programmes is one that reflects the achievements of students rather than one that is both course based and time served.'

Quality

For approximately half the colleges involved in the project the main issue was how to measure the quality of learner support services. TQM, Consultants at Work, quality circles and selected audits were all among the methods used. Another important issue was the relationship with curriculum quality issues. For instance, one college stated that its Central Admissions Unit assisted it in meeting quality goals, another used ROA feedback. The link between quality and resource allocation was also established.

Learner support describes the facilities needed by individuals for full participation in programmes or courses of study and to help them become learners, for example childcare facilities, information on financial support or personal counselling.

Learning support defines the additional support which is necessary for some students to learn effectively and to progress and achieve. This might be direct support, e.g. note taker, signing support, assistance with personal care needs or provision of braille material, or teaching strategies may need to be modified, materials adapted. Additional teaching to support access to the curriculum may be given to meet specific needs such as literacy, numeracy, social skills, English as a second or other language, study skills or daily living skills. Some students may require a modified curriculum for all parts of their college programme.

Lewisham College intends to use its Strategic Quality Management System to ensure the coherence and consistency of services by establishing quality characteristics, standards and measures for each area of service provision.

A first step in any review of learner support is an audit of all the existing services, and a functional analysis which allows learner and learning support to be distinguished. The latter is one element of learner support and should be an integral part of a whole support system.

What correlation is there between the effectiveness of a college's learner services and participation, increased retention and achievement? How can this be measured?

The development of a unified learner support system, is a key part of a college's strategic planning, and its existence and successful operation are important factors in raising levels of participation and achievement.

Increasingly, as student or learner services are organised as part of a 'corporate servicing sector', the relationship with quality issues becomes more central. Hence the long-term need to establish a corporate capability for learner/learning services with quality as its basis.

Filton College includes a list of standards for a range of services including guidance and student support in its development plan. There is general recognition that the development of appropriate performance indicators presents difficulties and Handsworth College is hoping to investigate some of these as part of its short-term quality objectives.

What performance indicators are required to demonstrate the quality and cost-effectiveness of student services and learning resources?

One college incorporated a college-wide survey on the awareness and effectiveness of learner services into its institutional review and evaluation procedures.

Apart from defining learner support services, there is a need to determine the locations, management and staffing of these services. The relationships between other activities should be established, for example between learning support, various types of assessment and Records of Achievement.

How is college-wide consensus on the need for and value of learner services best reached?

Support and achievement

Establishing relationships between cross-college learner support staff and departmentally-based teaching staff is essential if there is to be a coherent co-operative ethos. Building cross-college teams is vital.

At Loxley College these will be discovered through an initial assessment in basic skills on entry to the college. An initial assessment pack for full-time students is to be piloted in 1992-3 so that a refined version will enable the college to offer induction and initial assessment at any time in the college year. A tutor's handbook, building on the experience of core skills development, is also being prepared. The college hopes that these measures will also help staff to prepare for the implications of the National Curriculum for entry and progression in FE colleges.

How can teachers best be supported in reviewing their own roles in the light of the new services?

Transition points

The general impetus towards improving student records and transfer documentation, especially the introduction of Records of Achievement and action planning, has caused many colleges to review their tutorial systems.

Norfolk College of Arts and Technology is piloting a centralised tutorial system in which 'study advisers' are responsible for updating students' files, generating ROA reviews and arranging access to core-skills provision. Each study adviser has a case load and eventually it is hoped to extend this role through the introduction of learning support officers.

There is a growing interest, now given additional impetus by *Funding Learning*, in establishing the cost of these services and obtaining value for money. Measures which demonstrate both the quality and cost-effectiveness of learner and learning support services are needed.

Establishing a comprehensive range of learner and learning support services at entry, on programme, and at exit, depends upon careful identification and analysis of the different types of support needed at each stage, and on the capacity to review support strategies regularly in the light of curriculum changes and available resources.

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Colleges need to monitor the 'mix' of support opportunities being taken up by some learners in order to help learners evaluate their use and effectiveness. This will also help colleges to decide whether their use is masking other issues such as ineffective teaching or inappropriate assessment procedures.

Colleges identified a range of cross-college posts and organisational arrangements, sometimes under the management of a vice-principal, e.g. student services manager, careers co-ordinator, APL/access co-ordinator, ROA co-ordinators and flexible learning co-ordinators in one college.

In another college, the students services officer and the head of school (learning support) were responsible to the director of curriculum and operations. In a third, an SMT member was responsible for client services including admissions, marketing and schools/employer liaison. One college had recently appointed a director of student services; another cited an assistant principal as head of learning support. Some colleges distinguished between learner support and learning support with head of student support unit and head of learning support.

Corporate capability

Developing a corporate capability to provide learner/learning support is a major interest. One participating college referred to the need to retain 35% of total income for infrastructure and development. Others gave examples of specific moves in this direction such as concentrating transfer documentation into a central admissions unit.

What organisational structure and resourcing arrangements best suit a college's own needs and existing developments?

The organisation and funding of support services for part-time and adult learners remain of concern for colleges. Systematic monitoring of take-up of services by these learners and the pro-active marketing of services to potential and existing learners should help to define the place and value of support services within the college structure.

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From teaching to supporting learning

Over half of the stated intended outcomes identified in the project were about improved opportunities for learners. Benefits included 'meeting the social and personal needs of students', 'encouraging students to feel more in control of their progress', 'equipping students to make a better transition to HE/employment', 'enabling students to make informed, realistic decisions' and 'encouraging the transition towards independent living'.

Reaching college-wide consensus on curriculum issues, such as core skills, tutorial policy and work experience must be part of a strategic approach to meeting learners' support needs.

Some colleges noted that the shift from a department to a collegiate approach towards major curriculum developments revealed deep antagonisms which, in the words of one college, amounted to a 'profound cultural dissonance'. Department 'sub-cultures' could be in conflict with the emerging college culture; teams sometimes operated independently of agreed college goals, and frozen attitudes based on craft skills boundaries were a challenge to managers and colleagues.

What degree of resourcing is it appropriate to shift from teaching to learning and supporting the learner?

At Eastleigh, the first task was to carry out an analysis of the organisational culture as a step towards reaching a 're-alignment' of college sub-cultures. Successes included unfreezing attitudes based on rigid course boundaries and obtaining parity of esteem between teaching and non-teaching staff. Change is often 'messy', and needs to be underpinned by the staff's professional attachment to some central purpose such as the enhancement of student life chances.

Colleges should move away from over-reliance on individual staff enthusiasm or a fading tradition of pastoral support. A coherent, well-resourced service is essential underpinning for flexibility and quality.

Colleges must lead and support staff in their new roles as managers of learning, at a time when morale may be low and sub-cultures may be in conflict with the emerging corporate culture. Raising staff awareness, overcoming cynicism, dealing with role-change problems, involving part-time staff more, and gaining the acceptance of non-teaching staff are on every college's agenda.

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For Handsworth College, cultural shifts which support college aims mean the development of networks of people sharing the college mission, and a pro-active management of these networks.

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Supporting learners with special needs

Barnet College now offers a part-time course for students with a mental illness.

Initially a development of the outreach work at Friern Barnet Hospital, it is now a positive way of providing education for hospitalised students and those who have been moved into the community.

Barnet College also has a Special Educational Needs (SEN) policy reviewed annually. An important focus in 1990/1 was to encourage integration into mainstream courses. This has been successfully implemented for students with a learning difficulty and those with a physical sensory impairment by

Staff development issues relating to the enhanced roles of non-teaching staff may become entangled with demarcation disputes, unless colleges have prepared the way carefully and tackled staff anxieties directly. Strategies include seeking investors in People (IP) status, attempting multi-skilling for staff, enhancing basic skills, establishing a culture of achievement and introducing appraisal schemes.

Colleges need to demonstrate their awareness of the strains placed on tutors in dealing with contradictory curriculum messages (NVQ and GNVQs; traditional syllabuses) and in providing or organising suitable learning support.

- establishing a bank of volunteers supported by a training programme;
- allocating four hours a week to members of the SEN team to support those students who are integrating into mainstream provision;
- providing a staff development programme to raise awareness and respond to specific issues;
- having the SEN co-ordinator act as an ongoing support to course teams and students; in many cases this has solved incipient problems.

Core skills within an A-level
programme

At Tresham College an A-level co-ordinator has been appointed to develop an integrated system for delivering, assessing, recording and reviewing core skills as part of the overall A-level programme. The college has developed supported self-study materials and a learning base staffed part time for European studies and languages.

This FEU project, 694, was carried out during a period when definitions of core skills and their potential inclusion in vocational qualifications and A levels were under discussion at a national level. Many colleges wanted to await the outcomes of the national work before committing themselves to any significant developments. However, at least three colleges involved in the project were convinced of the value of core skills work for their students and wanted to take up this theme as part of the wider project.

How can colleges provide core skills development for part-time and adult students when core skills are not an explicit assessment requirement of the qualification?

Colleges recognise the need to develop core skills within the learning programmes of all students, whether or not core skills are an assessment requirement of the qualification.

Progress in implementing core skills requires senior management support. Curriculum development teams can achieve only limited progress; for the development to be effective and efficient, it needs to be part of a high profile whole-college strategy linked to other key curriculum developments.

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To address the problem of convincing staff and students of the value of core skills, colleges can also give them greater prominence through action planning and tutorial procedures, including reviewing and recording achievement.

Core skills and progression

Nelson and Colne College is tracking college leavers and asking them to report back, from employment or HE, on the skills they are currently using or were required to have, on entry. Moreover, the vice-principal and MIS officers at Nelson and Colne are devising a points system to record entry, exit and intermediate points of achievement in core skills, as well as other areas.

Measuring 'value added by means of achievement in core skills may be a useful way forward in terms of achievement-related resourcing systems and as a performance indicator. What would this entail in practice?

College generally would like to improve the delivery of core skills to A-level students, and see this as a priority.

Core skills in A level and BTEC

Yeovil College has created a cross-college BTEC Common Skills working group to develop common procedures and systems to share and disseminate examples of good practice within the college. Their post-16 Science programme has a common first year for both A level and BTEC students before specialisation in year two

Core skills are often being developed in both academic and vocational courses but informally. It is helpful to map where staff and students already think the skills are occurring and to use recording of achievement and action planning to recognise achievement. Further development of skills which are not occurring can be arranged through varying the teaching and learning strategies and environments.

Could the problems associated with 'bolt-on' approaches be overcome by embedding core skills development? e.g.

- with a wider range of teaching and learning strategies?
- a wider range of learning resource areas, including RWEs?
- with materials and assignments to develop core skills for all students - by building core skills into the induction/action planning/ recording of achievement process for all students?
- by using work experience or a community project to develop and record achievement in core skills.

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'Bolt-on' delivery models may have a place in learning programmes but core skills initiatives seem to work best for both students and staff when embedded in the whole curriculum process and planned in advance as an integral part of curriculum development, i.e. assignments and materials; teaching and learning strategies; action planning, assessment and recording of achievement; resourcing decisions.

Carefully planned use of learning resource centres, which enable students to develop a range of skills, will aid core skills development but should support the core skills work in the vocational or subject area rather than operate completely separately.

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It will be important for colleges to build core skills into their overall quality frameworks, i.e. to address achievements in core skills and the processes which support core skills development within student attitude surveys and as performance indicators for course reviews.

Could GNVQ core skills units have a wider application?

The cost of NVQs

Assessment for NVQs seems to be a major issue for colleges. It is costly, as Lewisham College reported: 'It is already evident that NVQ work is expensive, particularly in the demands it makes for materials for student assessment. The cost of assessment... will need to be addressed in the pricing structure of the college offer.'

However, there is also some evidence that colleges are operating with outdated concepts of NVQs, inadequate information and little evaluation of the introduction of NVQs so far. Colleges admit that they still do not know how to cost assessment for NVQs, track students working towards competence, or construct learning programmes which satisfy the demands of the NVQ, offer flexible routes to the outcomes and which are financially viable.

The project provided clear evidence that colleges are generally enthusiastic about NVQs and have some expertise in dealing with them. They are attracted by the prospect of greater curriculum flexibility and student centredness, and the potential of NVQs to open up access to vocational qualifications, perhaps through APL.

Another college commented: 'Each assessment takes a very long time. If college staff are to be involved, then a way must be found to pay them outside the constraints of class-contact hours. ... The college's contribution has to be realistically priced but this may mean candidates cannot afford the training or assessment.'

Colleges are finding it increasingly necessary to consider the resource implications of the introduction of NVQs and to plan capital investments in tandem with the curriculum. The delivery and assessment of NVQs may founder on the absence of suitable resources and/or the cost. Similarly, colleges may need to evaluate the return on investments in NVQs. Some colleges which had committed considerable resources to the introduction of NVQs, only to find little demand, were now committing even more resources to NVQs in an effort to supplant the need for employer involvement.

As NVQs replace some traditional qualifications, will some NVQs be difficult, if not impossible, for FE colleges to offer? Can colleges make the curriculum changes necessary to enable them to offer a reasonable range of NVQs? If not, what role will they play in relation to vocational training and assessment, as NVQs replace existing vocational qualifications?

- the costs and potential rewards of delivering specific NVQs;
- the ability of the college to provide realistic work environments for developing and assessing competence in specific vocational sectors;
- the role of the college in training and supporting workplace supervisors;
- the balance of NVQs and GNVQs offered by the college.

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Colleges need to take a critical and strategic look at their future role in relation to the delivery and assessment of NVQs. It may be that as some qualifications are re-specified as NVQs, the role of colleges in the qualification is diminished, because of the requirement for realistic work environments and because of cost. On the other hand, in some sectors employers are realising that colleges can provide the necessary training, assessment and assessor training more effectively and efficiently than they themselves, especially if the colleges are able to take a flexible and imaginative approach to delivery.

Most colleges pointed to the increased costs of programmes leading to NVQs compared to non-NVQ programmes. A typical comment pointed to 'a disproportionate cost to the college in terms of staff time and finance. A massive amount of administration for [all grades of staff has occurred.'

Some colleges are finding it impossible to deliver all the applied occupational training required for NVQs. They may have to review whether they can deliver the NVQ which replaces a non NVQ. In turn, this may require the college to consider how it fills any resulting gaps in its provision, especially where it wishes to protect or enhance progression routes.

What profile of vocational education and training will the college offer? Will the college continue to offer NVQs when GNVQs are established? Colleges will need to consider their NVQ offer alongside their GNVQ offer, in order to provide opportunities for credit accumulation, i.e. to allow for the acquisition of related occupationally specific NVQ units to complement broader-based GNVQ programmes and the acquisition of broader-based GNVQ units by NVQ candidates?

Inhibiting factors

Nelson and Colne College identified a number of factors inhibiting the implementation of NVQs, including:

- the focus on occupational competence, when many adults require a more general approach to returning to learn;
- the difficulty of creating an APL process when a significant proportion of those coming forward have not previously followed any competence-based training scheme.

It may be necessary to plan for the loss of qualifications from the curriculum as they become NVQs, as well as for the introduction of new NVQs.

Are NVQs an appropriate goal for people who are not in employment and supported in training by their employers? Will colleges be able to provide the necessary opportunities for developing and offering occupational competence? The answers to these questions could have significant consequences for unemployed adults needing occupationally specific training.

It will be necessary for colleges to ensure that they are operating with up-to-date information about the local market and about national developments.

Most colleges found that employers have little knowledge of NVQs, even large employers with well organised personnel and training departments. Moreover, many colleges are failing to plan their own timetables for the introduction of NVQs. This means that colleges are sometimes allowing themselves insufficient lead-in time to prepare for NVQs and to shape the curriculum on their own terms.

Colleges are failing to attract new client groups through offering NVQs, because they are tending to 'deliver' NVQs as if they are traditional qualifications, to the same client group they would have recruited previously (e.g. full-time students).

It is apparent that colleges

may have to invest in upgrading premises and training staff. Harlow College listed the work that needed to be done in order to develop the NVQ curriculum further: premises adaptation: office service centre for simulated office experience; coffee shop and reception facility for hairdressing and beauty salons and training restaurant; plans for new construction block meeting CITB standards; floristry shop. Staff development [total 318 hours]; assessor training [total 13 staff].

Is assessment for NVQs 'real' practical and cost effective in colleges? If not, what role can colleges play in training and assessment for NVQs? Should college staff be developing a role in workplace assessment, training and assessing workplace assessors, providing related off-the-job, top-up training?

Despite the fact that NVQs 'decouple learning from assessment', offering the potential to devise and offer new and flexible modes of learning and a range of assessment services, it seems that this potential is not generally being exploited by colleges.

Key role for colleges in some sectors

Many colleges view NVQs as a means of modularising the curriculum. The clustering of NVQ units to form blocks of learning which deliver the outcomes of a number of NVQ units is popular and shows how colleges can overcome the perceived difficulties of delivering qualifications made up of units of unequal size. On the other hand, this approach may block flexible access for part-time students and a wider range of clients, e.g. employed adults.

There is some evidence, especially from the care sector, that as qualifications are respecified as NVQs, the role of the college in the qualification is diminished. This produces a situation where the faster the college introduces the NVQ, the faster the college ceases to have much role in delivering, or assessing, the NVQ.

Isle of Wight College of Arts and Technology reported that the college had 'moved from a position where it looked very much as if the college might be marginalised in the provision of NVQs... to one where [employers] have come to realise that, not only can [the college] do the off-the-job training better than them but it is also more cost effective to use [the college].'

Can NVQs assist progress towards flexible learning and modularisation of the curriculum? Does the apparent absence of new learning delivery systems for NVQs mean that opportunities to make learning more flexible, individual and innovative have been lost, that new methods of learning are not wanted or that new delivery systems are not possible?

The cost of NVQ assessment is a major issue for colleges. The time factor may be reduced when staff become more familiar with the process but the cost will need to be addressed in the pricing structure of the college offer.

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On the basis of the sample represented in this project, it seems that FE colleges are offering NVQs in fewer than 15 out of the 37 categories in which they are available (as at Autumn 1992). Part of the reason could be that colleges have no tradition of offering training in some of the categories for which NVQs have been developed. Another factor might be a lack of market demand.

Unitisation versus integration
In the Care sector there seems to be some consensus,

(including the awarding body) that unitising learning will not allow individuals to develop competence. This sector values integration of learning, and the emerging delivery model 'packages' learning into 'modules' but a learning module

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The issue of NVQ assessment may be the most important one for colleges to manage. The technical and staff development/training issues in assessment do not seem to be as critical as resource issues. Colleges face resource issues on three fronts:

- assessment for NVQs can be expensive because it is time consuming and may require one-to-one staffing;
- materials can be expensive;
- most of all, colleges simply do not have access to the specialised resource contexts (i.e. RWEs) necessary for NVQ assessment.

This last is compounded by the differing criteria for RWEs. In some vocational sectors the RWE need only satisfy very simple criteria — perhaps that certain products must be produced; in other sectors the criteria might include a variety of contexts; but, in some NVQs, the criteria might relate to processes, interpersonal relationships and aspects of task management that cannot easily be replicated.

may underpin a number of NVQ units, or vice versa. A learning programme is designed for the entire qualification and then broken down into 'modules'. This approach differentiates modules of learning from units of accreditation, allows the modules to fit specific circumstance - locations, time, etc, and usually means that modules are designed to underpin different aspects of competence. The disadvantage may be that credit accumulation becomes more difficult but this is the price paid for integrating learning.

Colleges may face conflicting pressures as applicants demand qualifications that cannot be delivered in the college, employers are unable to provide sufficient training places and funding is geared to outcomes specified in terms of NVQs. It is already clear that in some sectors, colleges will have to restructure and rationalise the vocational curriculum as NVQs and GNVQs are developed. Colleges need to become far more aware of (local) employer training needs and the possibilities of establishing training consortia of employers and colleges, in which they may have only a very limited role in the delivery and assessment of the qualification. The implications for the proportion of occupational training delivered to NVQ standard by FE are obvious, as are the implications for the profile of students following learning programmes to NVQs. (It would seem that they are less likely to be non-employed adults and more likely to be day-release employees of large firms.) There is only some evidence that FE colleges are approaching the introduction of NVQs in this way.

The incremental approach

Colleges saw FEU's credit framework proposal (*A Basis for Credit?*) as a multi-purpose instrument for introducing new systems within colleges and across the sector as a whole. Credit-based systems were seen as a key development in making learning opportunities more flexible and cost effective.

- incremental/step by step modularisation of the curriculum;
- whole college/great leap forward.

In relation to modularisation colleges are following one of two approaches:

- rationale for a credit-based approach is not confined to modularisation or credit accumulation and transfer. Colleges saw many uses for credits as a way of measuring and quantifying achievement, including:
 - establishing a common means of measuring 'value added' across different programmes/qualifications;
 - measuring and monitoring quality of provision;
 - establishing new funding and resourcing mechanisms to replace SSRs;
 - developing systems of accountability within institutions;
 - developing greater parity between different routes and qualifications/internal and external progression routes;
 - developing opportunities for adults;
 - establishing greater parity between different routes and qualifications.

What focus should a college develop in its approach to designing a modular system?

'The problem lies principally in the scale of the task involved in the full modularisation of provision. We decided to encourage developments at a subject level rather than force top-down change. Thus, individual areas are not yet connected within a single system, which is our ultimate aim. The areas of particularly significant development are those in which NVQ development is most advanced. Although the college is committed to modularisation this will not be achieved in the short term. The immediate concern is to utilise courses and to ensure that admissions and assessment procedures are compatible.'

The college also plans to harmonise the CAT scheme already operating in its HE provision, with its FE modular system, thus providing a single system across both sectors.'

The credit-based approach appeared to offer a new way forward for those who had experienced setbacks and disappointments in a number of initiatives of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In particular with regard to modular developments, but also in relation to flexibility, 14-19 TVET-led developments, NVQs and progression to HE.

In developing and implementing credit-based systems within FE colleges it is crucial to clarify that the credit framework as outlined in *A Basis for Credit?* makes a conceptual distinction between:

- units of assessment and units of delivery;
- credits as general recognition and the Credits as educational currency;
- units which are defined in terms of outcomes and credits which are defined in terms of notional learning time at a specified level.

A central difficulty with large-scale modularisation is getting staff teams together. Llandrillo addresses this by organising 'whole-college' days to support the modularisation objective. The college is also in the process of reviewing its CMIS operation, including the 'islands of good practice' which exist in the College, in an attempt to improve its tracking system.

How can the impact of modularisation on participation, attainment and quality be evaluated?

The great leap forward

Loxley, Llandrillo and Solihull all aim to have the main components of a credit-based framework in place by September 1993.

In its institutional plans, Solihull aims to achieve the following:

- How developmentally 'ready' is an institution for the 'big bang' approach?
- How can support and training be provided to help staff to define outcomes and develop units?

Impetus for change

Project colleges described three main catalysts for change, e.g.:

The endurance of a course-based culture in colleges, the continued influence via traditional exams of professional and validating bodies and the resistance to changing in A levels, make movement difficult.

- the expectation that FEFC will resource, at least partly, through outcomes;
- the need to monitor the quality of learning outcomes and distance travelled;
- the need for students to accelerate their acquisition of qualifications not only because of the cost of time spent in the college but also because of opportunities lost when students are out of the job market for too long.

Other motivators included the publication of FEU's *A Basis for Credit?*, local developments associated with OCNs and Access Federations, GEST funding in relation to NVQs and the publication of BTEC common skills.

What steps need a college take to ensure coherence within learning programmes?

What networking should a college develop to link staff involved in this work?

The process of developing credit-based systems and credit rating units internally and in collaborative arrangements with other institutions provides both:

- a way of assessing quality across an institution;
- a focus for staff development and training.

Colleges saw historical resourcing systems and inadequate computer information systems as significant barriers to progress. The development of IT systems which support staff in their increased or changed administrative duties are essential. In particular colleges need MIS which can track learners on an individual basis. It is also necessary for credit-based funding regimes.

Technical questions still need to be explored, for example, should core skills be assessed in separate units or embedded in all units?

What strategies best help colleges in tackling the duplication and overlap between different curriculum and departmental areas as part of the change process, with subsequent resourcing and organisational changes?

Management responsibility for staff development is moving to the senior management team and operational responsibility to the remits of faculty heads and middle managers.

Although the project did not identify staff development as a theme, colleges were invited to report on significant changes in their conceptualising and management of staff development. The following trends emerged:

Management responsibility for staff development is being coupled with responsibility for curriculum and / or quality. Only one college reported the alignment of staff development with responsibility for personnel.

In many cases 'staff development' is being subsumed under the broader concept of Human Resource Development. The concept of Human Resource Management' was not used.

Colleges were acknowledging the importance of doing research and development themselves in order to deliver a quality service. There was an acceptance that colleges will probably need to provide resources for this purpose themselves, for example, by generating external income, creating surpluses or top slicing the budget.

A college's emphasis on staff development is a key factor in its ability to deliver a quality product. Staff development was generally equated with institutional needs and priorities, rather than the personal development of individuals.



There was an increasing imperative to include all staff (i.e. non-teaching as well as 'academic') in all aspects of staff development based on the perception that all staff are responsible for a quality service, for example, in needs analysis, staff development programmes, and performance review/appraisal schemes. The replacement, or disappearance, of GEST was seen as positive in this respect, because GEST only made provision for teaching staff, and therefore led to divisiveness and a tendency to neglect the needs of non-teaching staff.

Six out of the 22 colleges reported that they are seeking the Investor In People kitemark. IIP was seen to be supportive of colleges' own aims because it 'has at its heart, the concept that staff development is linked to institutional development, and is designed to improve the quality of the service offered to clients'.

Some common objectives for staff development were identified, including:

- assessor training and accreditation to TDLB Standards;
- more effective resource management by middle managers;
- programmes to support quality e.g. use of performance indicators, use of quality systems, customer care;
- developing an awareness of the perceptions and expectations of adult learners;
- enhancing the communication skills of managers.

Only two colleges mentioned appraisal. This is surprising considering that all colleges should have been engaged in putting in place a scheme for 1993. Both colleges indicated that their schemes adopted a supportive, developmental approach to appraisal, to underpin continuing professional development.

college case studies

Principals of a number of the colleges participating in the Key Curriculum Developments project, were invited to write about their experience of managing a corporate approach to curriculum and strategic planning. The intention was to capture the unique 'voice' of each college.

The resulting case studies illustrate a variety of approaches towards:

- developing a whole-college capacity to convert policy into practice;
- promoting ownership of a common vision;
- involving staff at every level in planning and responsibility for quality;
- developing an organisational capacity to reflect on and continually learn from their own experience.

GATESHEAD COLLEGE

Gateshead is a tertiary college. There are several 11-18 schools in the area, as well as four FE colleges and a sixth-form college. (Gateshead College is the third largest college). The college is in an inner-city location although it also has rural catchment areas.

1991-2

Student FTEs	2,900
Staff FTEs	352
Number of sites	2

Twelve per cent of the student population (41% FTEs) are full time. Seventy-two per cent of the students are aged 19+. Students from ethnic minorities represent 1.2% of the student population.

The college is organised on a matrix basis. There is a strong commitment to the establishment of a 'single staff' and an emphasis on team approaches.

Support to learners at every stage of their college experience is given a high profile. It is co-ordinated centrally, and is expanding in parallel with the growth in student numbers.

Gateshead College is working on the implementation of a 'learning framework' involving modularisation of the curriculum and the establishment of a comprehensive range of flexible client-centred services.

THE CORPORATE APPROACH My dictionary tells me that corporate means forming a corporation; being incorporated. Having received today my Coopers and Lybrand Phase II review which tells me that we are progressing well towards incorporation, I wondered if FEU had developed a sudden and unlikely interest in bankers, lawyers and auditors! Well, of course it hasn't, but as colleges approach this so-called independence, they need to adopt, sooner rather than later, unified, single, whole-college approaches to their curriculum and strategic planning in the new sector. There will be no place in tomorrow's corporate college for factionalism or the entrenched departmentalism that pulls in opposite directions, focused on partisan views that do not support the college's mission. And since there will be no hiding places for ineffective and inefficient institutions, there will be no fooling yourself with a glossy corporate plan which is a marketing manager's magic transformation of six different documents. The only viable approach will be the corporate one:

- integrated strategic goals and milestones for the whole organisation;
- clear decision-making processes;
- efficient information flow;
- team development;
- mutual support;
- internal networking;
- cohesion around the College's mission.

THE CORPORATE MISSION It is relatively easy to come up with a snappy slogan:

'Gateshead College seeks to be the best on Tyneside'

or

'Gateshead College exists to provide high quality courses to everyone in our community'

It is not so easy to establish a statement of purpose that:

- differentiates us from other colleges;
- stands as a reference point in our decision making;
- is owned and understood by all our staff.

Most mission statements revolve around four themes which do not sit easily together — access, quality, growth and viability. An 'open door' mission is not the same as a growth-based statement and neither may be compatible with solvency and viability. The point of involving all stakeholders in the exercise of determining the mission is to resolve these tensions and to make it clear where the college stands, when all the chips are down. Staff involvement is crucial. A strong access and participation mission has consequences for the level of resources available per student and perhaps for examination results. If such a mission is adopted it must be owned by the people who will have to live with the consequences. Gateshead College's mission was derived from a major consultative exercise with staff in 1990 and is now underpinned by our work for the Investors in People award.

THE CORPORATE STRUCTURE Creating a corporate structure involves more than a reshuffle of second and third tier managers with a set of new exciting titles for former heads of department — Director of Strategic Quality Assurance, Vice-Principal for Corporate Advancement (Car Parks). It requires a single structure for a whole college in which all aspects of the college activity can be tracked from top to bottom; a structure which accommodates constant change and fine tunes itself without bolting on special units or creating committee-based solutions to unforeseen circumstances. A corporate structure requires a clarity of role, responsibility and accountability which is beyond simple descriptions of the roles of people in your charge.

At Gateshead the key features of our structure are:

- a single framework for all course and programme management;
- a developed, embedded learning support function;
- the location of all staff in teams;
- a second tier of four strategic managers who collectively exercise responsibility for every aspect of college life;
- a third tier of operations managers who manage and monitor the processes required to implement our plans.

All of this happens in the context of tight target setting, combined with a teamwork and networking approach, underpinned by a human resource strategy that promotes a culture of problem solving, reflection and continuous improvement.

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

What does this mean? All pulling together? All in the same boat? Sticking together? Having our arguments in private? A form of cabinet responsibility? It may mean some of these things but more importantly, it is about corporate responsibility for the management of curriculum, strategic planning and resources. Corporate management demands that managers understand that it is only by working together that we achieve high quality learning opportunities which meet the needs, aptitudes and aspirations of all sectors of the community. While specific roles are identified very clearly within our management team, it is explicitly recognised that these roles will inevitably overlap.

At Gateshead College the strategic and the operational aspects of college management are clearly differentiated — by job title, by working arrangements, by role, by accountability. The four strategic managers share one open-plan office and at the far end of a long corridor the operations managers are also located in a single base room. Each room has secretarial support and networked

Apple Mac computers (one for each manager). The two teams of managers clearly benefit from these working arrangements, not only for the obvious ease of communication but for the less tangible effects of simply being together so much and discussing issues openly with colleagues and visitors within earshot of their peers. Of course, the distinction between strategic and operational management is not always straightforward in practice and tensions are bound to arise — not all of them creative! But to be in a college where conversations, even if heated, are about the interface between strategy and action is considerably more rewarding than the tired old business of territorial squabbling between, say, General Education and Technology or other separate 'empires'.

The process is helped by a formal weekly meeting of the full management team, which works to a fixed agenda in which one hour is allocated to updating, briefing and consideration of scheduled monitoring reports (55 standard reports covering students, courses, learning support, human resource, finance) and a further hour is spent discussing development papers produced by members of the team. In order to demolish the widespread myth that such meetings are the source of all key decision-making, we have published a statement of purpose for the management meeting:

- to monitor institutional performance;
- to communicate college events and developments;
- to communicate and consider significant external events and developments;
- to record significant management action for dissemination to staff.

Full minutes are widely distributed.

The emphasis in all of this is on college performance, strategic development and implementation, function performance and realistic targets. It is rarely defensive or hegemonical. No member of the management team is a budget holder of any significance;

authority is derived from an open, confident management style with the emphasis on accountability not resource control.

CORPORATE PLANNING It is a cliché to observe that planning is a process rather than a product — the product is the corporate plan. Nevertheless, it is a hard habit to break and there is considerable utility in such a document as long as it is:

- short, clear, simple;
- links mission to goals, achieved through time-referenced milestones/targets;
- comprehensive, with curriculum provision dominant;
- underpinned by appropriate separate plans for human and physical resources, finance and quality assurance.

A well-presented plan can play a large part in establishing a corporate view of the college. However, clichés are often correct and it is the process of forming the goals and developing the plans that is critical for success. The trick is to implement an effective 'Goals Down-Plans Up' environment, the essence of loose/tight management, in which the organisation is driven by the need to achieve its purpose but the means are increasingly delegated to those closer to the learners.

Our planning process is led by a senior manager whose role embraces human resource development and management, capital development, quality assurance and strategic planning. He works closely with the two senior curriculum managers in assessing the market and producing student number forecasts. Central to these arrangements are our three curriculum 'businesses':

- full-time programmes;
- continuing and higher education;
- employer services.

These three 'investment centres', based on clients and market segmentation rather than academic or occupational groupings, are defined by a collection of programmes and the individual learners within them. They are used to analyse the relationship between learning outputs and resource inputs and provide better management information on which to base decisions. Budgets are allocated according to an FTE formula and the three operations managers who run each of the businesses purchase delivery from teaching teams. In this, they are guided by predetermined output targets ranging from staff-student ratios, unit cost, completion rates, etc. to new forms of performance indicators including 'distance-travelled' targets, quality characteristics and learner services targets. This 'investment centre' approach will enable decisions about curriculum development and management to be devolved to a lower level and so contribute to our 'Goals Down-Plans Up' approach.

CORPORATE STYLE — HOW WE LOOK AND HOW WE BEHAVE Most colleges have invested in some form of corporate image consultancy leading to a smart new logo and house style. Not all, however, have invested in making that visual image a reality throughout the organisation. Staff cynicism about design consultants' fees, at a time of resource constraint, is well justified if the bright new style is only seen on recruitment advertising and letters from the office of Principal and Chief Executive. This is a missed opportunity, because a distinctive logo and print style can contribute to a sense of belonging and commitment to the college. Certainly at Gateshead College 'the bird' (our logo) is very strongly associated, internally and externally, with the relaunch of the College in 1990 and has been a conspicuous success in stamping a new feel on the place. It is not the logo itself which is significant but the use to which it has been put and the discipline attached to its proper application. So our logo and college colours are not only found on letterheads, external and internal signs, but on all sorts of documents and forms. All our internal stationery is produced by our marketing unit. Student assignments are presented in a consistent college

style. All documents are produced by desktop publishing on an Apple Mac machine.

Not so much to do with learning? Well, corporate style must be kept in perspective but we must not underestimate the importance of high quality consistent visual presentation, regardless of course or curriculum area. It is one aspect of entitlement, a service standard that reinforces messages about membership of a college and access to all its facilities and opportunities.

Looking good is of no value if we don't behave well. A college should buzz with purposeful activity, busy but at ease with itself, not just on campus, not only in the central admissions unit, but in the canteen, registry, learning centres, classrooms and workshops. Achieving this is not easy. Part of the answer lies in structure and management, part in training in customer care, part in recruiting good people. But much depends on key human resource policies — not so much the staff development programme as the fundamental features that determine how the organisation is.

Gateshead College has invested substantially in team development, across the whole institution. We work with a single-status approach, which is as well in a college that has 170 'academic' staff and 130 'support' staff. Two or three times a term there are meetings of senior staff — all senior support staff, senior lecturers and those on the management spine, for extensive briefings on internal and external developments or workshop-style sessions exploring, for example, aspects of the strategic plan.

These events are often linked to the production of college bulletins — major policy statements prepared by a senior manager, introduced to senior staff and issued to all staff with feedback invited individually or by team. Sometimes the draft is prepared with a task group. Recent bulletins have launched college policy on entitlement, learning frameworks and quality assurance and control. If this seems unconnected to a corporate approach to curriculum planning, it is worth stressing just how important it is to

create a corporate culture that makes a holistic style the natural way to do things. Policy development does not come from representatives of sectional interests or protracted committee processes. It is in the hands of those with functional accountability for the policy, who work with other stakeholders and then communicate it to everyone (whether they care or not). There are no committees at Gateshead College (well, Health and Safety excepted).

These processes also remind us that corporate management requires new solutions and is more than a top team revamp and a lot of exhortation.

The corporate approach demands drive and determination from a principal and the management team. There are times when you can

get too close to thinking you can make the trains run on time, or perhaps march into Poland. A relatively unnoticed part of the 1992 FHE Act requires the new FE corporations to 'have regard to the need to ensure that academic staff of the institution have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or any privileges they may have at the institution'.

Hear! Hear! (But why not all staff?) The healthy corporate college values its dissidents.

Chris Hughes
Principal

HANDSWORTH COLLEGE

Handsworth College is an inner-city further education college, with five other FE colleges and three sixth-form centres within a four mile radius.

1991-2

Student FTEs	3340
Staff FTEs	189
Number of college sites	9

Seventy-one per cent of Handsworth College students are from ethnic minority groups. The ratio of part-time to full-time students is 2:1. Sixty-one per cent of students are aged 19+, although the college expects work with 16-19 year olds to expand, as will access and degree level work.

The college has a senior management team made up of the principal, director of studies and director of resources. The two directors lead directorates. The study directorate is responsible for operational delivery, through faculty managers, and for marketing, curriculum and development, and quality development through cross-college managers. It is likely that the structure will remain stable while the roles of the faculty managers will change as they take more responsibility for quality improvement.

Handsworth College emphasises the importance of cross-college teams and whole-college involvement in decision making. Despite the emerging competitive environment, Handsworth believes the successful development of provision is through networks of people and organisations who share a vision and can see the benefits from sharing. The management of these networks will place new demands on the organisational structure of the college.

INTRODUCTION This case study describes the development of a corporate approach to curriculum and strategic planning based on the work of many colleagues in Handsworth College. Underpinning the case study are some key assumptions which, because they are iconoclastic, need to be shared at the beginning:

- What the principal believes is not necessarily what the rest of the college thinks.
- The links between planning and reality are not to be taken for granted.
- You can't 'manage change'; you can only go along with it and do your creative best to exploit it.

In 1989 the Education Reform Act changed the FE environment. National Vocational Qualifications were making an impact on the curriculum, the emergence of Training and Enterprise Councils introduced a new dimension to training. Development in schools — the National Curriculum, TVEI, GCSE — had changed the expectations of school leavers. Amidst this turbulence it was obvious to all key stakeholders — students, staff, employers, governors — that Handsworth College needed to review the way it went about its business. From that time on, we have put sustained, collective, self-conscious effort into our organisation and development. It would be false, however, to draw a line at 1989 and pretend that this is when the process really began or to anticipate a time when it will end. The reality, of course, is that all organisations change and develop over time, or they cease to exist. It's just that some are more conscious of it than others, some claim to know what they are doing and few admit they don't.

Handsworth College was opened in 1887 as a regional centre for steam engineering. At some point in the past, the college, as part of its 'corporate approach to curriculum and strategic planning', decided to move out of the steam curriculum. Smart move, heh? But was it a planned move or crisis management? Was it seen as strategic or just obvious?

The point is that change happens and what counts is whether we are actively trying to work with it. Organisational theorists no longer see stability as the norm and change as exceptional. Change is the norm, so now we all try in our various ways to address organisational responsiveness as a key part of our agenda. In Handsworth, organisational development moved up our agenda in 1989 but we do not expect it to go away or to be finished ever! Tom Peters writes about the 'Nanosecond Nineties' by which he means, (possibly!), that in this decade we have to respond and think in micro-seconds. If that's true now, what of the next century?

But back to Handsworth and 1989. In a changing environment we set about a widespread process of consultation with colleagues and students. We brought in external consultants to help us reflect on ourselves. We held residencies for groups of staff to contribute to the debate. And, then, collectively, having consulted all colleagues, we established our key objectives for change:

- To establish a clear set of strategies for the future and ensure we all understood them.
- To improve communication, openness and participation in decision-making.
- To develop a creative and flexible organisation.
- To achieve teamwork throughout the organisation.
- To handle 'whole college' initiatives coherently.
- To ensure equal opportunities policies and implementation at all levels of the operation.

What follows is the core of the governors' paper which attempted to translate these objectives into practice by the Spring of 1990.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT 1990

The proposals for change

The college needs a simple set of statements, regularly updated, outlining its 'mission', strategy and ethos, which then determines its structure. What follows are detailed proposals, drawn up after long consultation, which address all these issues.

The mission

The business of Handsworth College is to create a learner-first organisation in which education entitlements can be delivered efficiently and in which the training needs of industry, commerce, and the individual, can be met.

The strategy

The achievement of this broad mission needs four priorities which taken together constitute a strategic framework for all the college's activities.

Partnerships — Handsworth College seeks to establish partnerships with a range of organisations where benefits can accrue to our students. These organisations include the LEA, the TEC, City of Birmingham departments, local universities, polytechnics, colleges and schools, commerce and local community groups.

A networked training system — Handsworth College is not a campus college but a networked training system offering a range of access points to training across the centre of Birmingham. We actively seek to widen this network as long as appropriate investment guarantees quality for the student.

The learning process — Handsworth College intends to develop high quality learning programmes tailored to individual need and to create a learning support operation spanning pre-enrolment counselling to exit services. We will accredit prior learning and provide flexible routes to NVQs. We are developing a range of higher education courses (HNC, HND, BA and BSc) which offer first class progression for our clients.

The information culture — Handsworth College recognises the information revolution. We seek to develop IT learning strategies which offer all staff and students appropriate entitlements. We further seek to harness IT to all aspects of college management.

Values

The summary of consultative discussions on 'vision and values for Handsworth' offers this version of the ethos we wish to foster:

'Handsworth College is a friendly, caring, student-centred and staff-supporting organisation emphasising quality development and delivery in all its activities with open and flexible access to learning and a total commitment to equal opportunities.'

STRUCTURE These proposals, via the consultation process, have been translated into ideas about structure which have gained general support, such as:

- The section is the college's basic 'unit of organisation'.
- Section heads and section staff need more input into decision-making which affects them.
- The section head role needs redefining to recognise the crucial importance of the section head as the 'senior teacher' in a team.
- Sections should not be clustered together in departments on a historical basis but realigned, on the basis of 'curriculum logic', into faculties.
- The new faculties must be different from the old departments in the following ways:
 - i) Their prime purpose is to facilitate curriculum 'synergy' to improve quality and provide a vehicle for efficient use of resources.
 - ii) They are bigger, and therefore, looser organisations.

iii) The faculty manager is there to support not control, and is accountable to a peer group, (the board of studies) and a super-ordinate (the director of studies).

iv) The faculty manager focuses on resource management and personnel issues, leaving the section head prime professional responsibility for delivery and quality.

v) Particular effort will be made to ensure that section heads and section staff do not become over-burdened, and there is sufficient support to ensure that faculty managers can carry out their role.

- Three functional teams, for student support, business development and curriculum support will work with and support the sections.
- A board of studies, faculty managers and functional managers, will manage the directorate of studies, giving clear executive focus to the management of the academic programme of the college.
- The board of studies is charged with putting whole-college issues before faculty or sectional interests.

TWO YEARS ON These proposals for change were adopted and implemented and for over two years now they have informed and shaped our activity. What has worked out and what remains to be done?

Success has been achieved in the following areas (in no particular order):

- The mission statement has been shared and is widely owned. It has been very helpful in achieving 'vertical alignment' in the organisation, ensuring the cleaners and lecturers, the caretaker and the principal have a similar, if not necessarily identical, view of what the college is about. (If you visit Handsworth College you will see a large, framed mission statement at all our entrances.)

- The empowerment of the sections and the section head as a 'leading professional' has killed 'department drag' and made for a more corporate culture. Strangely, the autonomy of small curriculum-based sections does not seem to manifest itself in the same kind of 'robber baron' territorial behaviour of the old, large departments. In that sense our 'horizontal integration' is much improved.
- Ensuring that cross-college functions are delivered in teams has enhanced the confidence of cross-college colleagues and led to excellent professional support being delivered to the sections.
- The statement about our values has helped drive decision-making and given greater perceived integrity to management decisions. These are generally now held accountable against our Values statement. In other words, if you are publicly committed to being 'caring', 'staff supporting' and standing for equal opportunities it is very hard for you to be cynical, insensitive or unfair (not, of course, that Handsworth colleagues would ever be like that!).
- Our strategic statements about partnership, networking, learning and so on have given real coherence to our activities, making us a very significant player on our boundaries, whether with the LEA, the TEC, schools, universities, etc. This clear set of strategies empowers managers to take decisions confidently without touching base all the time to see if they are getting it right.

These claims for success are all supported by statistics about, for example, students enrolled, retention rates, outcomes, income generation, and so on.

But, of course, we have our weaknesses and failures too. Crucially, we still have a long way to go in improving communication, openness and participation in decision-making. This may be partly because we are a multi-sited college but we do not intend to use that as an excuse. Instead we

have decided to use total quality management (TQM) to move our college forward and to make us more open, participatory and effective.

Seventy Handsworth staff have been trained in TQM by Fox Valley Quality Academy, Wisconsin. This has proved to be a very significant critical mass in moving the whole college towards an unselfconscious, natural use of TQM tools. You can't really have openness and participation, we believe, if you are locked into working parties, committees, agendas and computers as your main mode of interaction and communication. Not all problems can be solved in this way but if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. So we are working to share problem-solving, planning and consensus-building tools across our college. It is gratifying that you can now hear some colleagues talking about Pareto charts and affinity diagrams as naturally as memos or agendas. To make the point about TQM as emphatically as possible, we have paid particular attention to the way the college's strategic planning should embrace TQM philosophy.

What follows is a draft of the paper which aims to link our strategic planning to our TQM initiative. We hope and believe this paper helps us towards an overall framework for a corporate approach to curriculum and strategic planning.

PLANNING QUALITY — A STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS AT HANDSWORTH COLLEGE

Strategies

There are seven integrated strategies for continuing success:

- The Quality Training Programme
- The Whole-College Strategy for Success
- The Quality Assurance Initiative
- Quality Training in the Curriculum
- Internal Service Level Agreements
- Investors in People
- Strategic Planning for Success

Principles

The strategies are based on seven key principles:

- Students First
- We aim to meet and exceed our students' expectations
- We are a learning institution serving a learning community
- Quality is an issue for the whole college
- We are self-managed project teams
- We will banish hierarchy and liberate all our talents
- We will give all our people the tools to make quality decisions

The quality training programme

TQM training is the central initiative in our quality strategy. Handsworth College is a learning college serving a learning community and all our staff are quality leaders. We are also adding TQM to the core curriculum and expect every member of the teaching staff to be familiar with the principles and practice.

Every member of staff, teaching and non-teaching, has an entitlement to 20 hours of TQM training. So far 32 members of staff have been through the in-house training programme. This includes every member of the senior management team and 17 of the team leaders. There is a rolling programme of four, 20-hour training programmes running each year.

The whole-college strategy for success

The college has initiated a whole-college strategy for success. We have identified all the permanent college teams. Each of these teams is now establishing their critical success factors in the following areas:

- Planning for success
- Reporting success

- Improvement for success

- Research and development for success

The college governors have endorsed this strategy.

The quality assurance initiative

The quality assurance team is led by the director of studies and includes three faculty managers. The team is supported by the curriculum and quality development manager. The functions of the quality assurance team are to:

- validate all curriculum programmes;
- work with students, course, programme or curriculum teams, senior management team and the governors to establish standards for the college's products and services;
- monitor and evaluate, on a yearly basis, the achievement of these standards;
- inform students, the course, programme or curriculum teams, senior management team and the governors of the level of achievement of these standards;
- agree action plans with the teams and the senior management team to improve products and services;
- hold and analyse all internal and external reports on the college's products and services (e.g. the FEFC Quality Team, BTEC);
- moderate standards of assessment and accreditation;
- inform the strategic planning process.

During 1993-4 the quality assurance team will monitor every programme of study as part of the rolling programme.

Quality in the Curriculum

It is a college breakthrough objective to add TQM to the core curriculum for every full-time student by September 1994. Our contacts with business and industry indicate that for two years a TQM

qualification will be a competitive advantage for our students. After that time such a qualification will be a requirement. We believe that we can contribute to the success of local commerce by providing TQM-trained graduates and TQM training: a development in line with the college's mission. During 1993-4 we will develop the curriculum, the teaching resources and establish assessment and accreditation.

Internal service-level agreements

During 1993-4 we will develop service level agreements between the internal providers and internal customers. Typically a cross-college team will identify its customers and, in agreement with them, establish standards for services and products. During 1993-4 we will develop forms and protocols for such agreements.

Investors in People

The college has made a submission to become an Investor in People. This scheme is in line with our aim to be a learning community. Our staff development tutor and our personnel manager will work to meet the learning needs of all our staff, full time and part time, academic/teaching/training and administrative/support staff. We will be accredited as Investors in People by 1994.

Strategic planning for success

Our seven strategies and principles will inform and determine the college strategic planning processes. Feedback from students, the quality assurance team and the whole-college strategy for

success will be at the heart of the planning process for each team and in the senior management team.

CONCLUSION So, finally, what have we learned about organisation and development that we can offer to others? Mostly simple and pretty obvious things. We have learned that it is people not structures that count. We have learned that it is often easier to do things than to contemplate doing them. We have learned that you can never communicate too much. We have learned the value of slogans. Try these:

'We serve the top 100% of our community'

'If we can dream it we can do it'

'None of us is as good as all of us'

'Who shares wins'

But most of all we have learned that change is not an option. So we are still trying to learn not to be afraid of it. We want to be like a good surfer; we want to ride the waves of change and enjoy them, not fight them and go under. And in trying to do that we have learned that a bias for action, not talk, is essential. That means we have made mistakes and we will continue to make them but we think we've learned, a century and more after Mark Twain learned it, that 'he who grabs the cat by the tail knows 80% more about the cat than anybody else'.

Chris Webb

Principal

LLANDRILLO COLLEGE

Llandrillo College is an FE college serving a number of small, mainly coastal towns of around 10,000 to 15,000 population, and an extensive rural hinterland that is sparsely populated and where the first language is often Welsh. The nearest other FE providers are 20 miles away in one direction and 37 miles in the other. Community provision is managed by the college directly, or as the major partner with WEA, university extramural, etc. and there are no separate adult education institutions.

1991-2

Student FTEs 3,500 (each)

Teaching staff FTEs 230

Number of college sites:

1 main site

4 major outreach sites

In 1991-2, 54% of students were aged 21 and over. Thirty-three per cent students were part time. Less than one percent of the students are from ethnic minorities but there are issues of entitlement and equal opportunities arising from the policy of the college to cater for the needs of the Welsh-speaking community.

The college has set itself the target of modularising the entire curriculum by September 1993. This has necessitated substantial associated development in the areas of management information systems, administrative systems, student guidance systems, use of accommodation, staffing arrangements, staff development and learning resources. A fundamental curricular aim of the college is to remove barriers to access.

A process of staff training for Total Quality Management has started.

CORPORATE TRANSFORMATION The key issue facing colleges over the past few years has been widening access while improving quality against a reducing unit of resource. Llandrillo College is no exception and in the pursuit of this, decided on what management theorists describe as 'corporate transformation' allied to a 'strategic reassessment'. At the time (1989) these decisions were largely instinctive and no one was quite sure of the outcomes. What was clear was that the restructuring of Llandrillo College was necessary to meet a changing 'mission'. After nine months of consultation, including a visit to the USA to explore the concept of 'enrolment management', a structure evolved which was to begin the change process and enable the college to meet its new challenges.

The structural changes included:

- reduction in size, and change in character, of the senior management team;
- the creation of 13 operational schools of study, composed of small flexible teams. It was made clear that these would change to reflect effectiveness, and there have been three major changes so far;
- the creation of a functional arm to complement the operational arm of the college, which was to drive the 'strategic transformation'. Members of the senior management team spearhead the 'functional' areas, which include curriculum and planning, finance, marketing and clients and human resources. They strategically control these specialisms and seek to imprint corporate policy onto them;
- systematic and periodic review.

The internal committee structure is used explicitly to facilitate communication, be it information, consultation or policy decisions. It includes:

- the strategic/senior management team;
- the enrolment management team, (admissions, enrolments, school liaison, careers/guidance, publicity and marketing);

- the curriculum support team (flexible learning, quality, franchising/access, modularisation);
- the human resources team (personnel, staff development, equal opportunities, special needs, student services);
- finance and administration (finance, examinations, external funding, enterprise/TEC-funded work, MIS);
- the operations team (13 heads of school of study);
- *ad hoc* 'special interest' groups.

This structure, which has been in place for over two years, has required little change to meet the demands of incorporation.

Starting a transformation in ethos and culture is relatively easy; completing that transformation is more difficult. Important milestones have been reached, leading to a belief that the institution is moving forward in harmony and largely accepting the new ideals. Reassuringly it is the enthusiasm and commitment now evident at 'middle management' and course-team level which allow a spirit of adventure and confidence to exist.

FROM INSTINCT TO STRATEGY The recently re-defined 'College mission' and accompanying objectives can be summarised in three words:

Access, relevance and efficiency

These themes did not emerge suddenly during the consultation process but rather as a deliberate consequence of 'strategic intent'.

The nature of the changes involved are summarised below:

1. Widening access

Reaching into the community The 'community' in our context is two disparate groups. The first is urban, anglicised and situated predominantly in a string of small coastal towns with high seasonal unemployment. The second is rural, with a strong

Welsh cultural identity, Welsh speaking, with low diversity of employment types and high unemployment, situated in a large and sparsely populated hinterland. Both communities have shared a lack of educational opportunity where the barriers were as much attitudinal as physical. Reaching these communities was achieved by:

- taking the College to the students rather than expecting the reverse. This has involved opening outreach centres, ranging from accommodation in an enterprise centre in Rhyl to a disused primary school 1000 feet up in the Hiraethog;
- providing courses and support systems that encourage adults to re-enter education. In many cases this will be Second Chance and other adult basic education, but higher level progression is developing;
- teaching and learning bilingually. This has the spin-off of allowing the college to develop Welsh-medium expertise that can be transferred back to the college;
- building partnerships with other agencies. This has been essential not just for funding but for accessing various local and often informal networks;

The costs of community provision are high in terms of finance, management time and skill, relative to the return in terms of full-time equivalent students. However, the growth in community provision and recruitment onto mainstream and higher level courses fully justifies the strategy.

Local progression People in our catchment area are often reluctant or unable to travel any significant distance for education. We have catered for them by:

- franchising BTEC First Diplomas to the three schools most isolated from FE providers;
- improving access to general FE provision;
- setting up franchising and other partnerships with universities to provide local HE

opportunities. The demand is high and will increase as the costs of leaving home for HE rise. This is also often the only acceptable option for those with family commitments;

- providing Access to HE courses. There is very high participation in these access courses and we are now exploring with our partners two-year access courses that would allow exemption from the first year at the university.

Flexible delivery The college tries to enable students to learn at a time and pace of their own choosing and with minimum prescription of content. Techniques include:

- APL and assessment on demand. Take up of the former has been minimal and our feeling is that it will not become a major route to qualification, unless there is greater acknowledgement of it within funding mechanisms;
- open access drop-in centres and area staffing.

The former are permanently-staffed specialist areas (electrical installation and secretarial) with use restricted to mixed groups of students on specific courses; the latter are permanently-staffed, specialist areas, open to all students on a non-timetabled or timetabled basis. The first was opened in 1987 and provision is now available in English and communication, Mathematics, IT, technology/electronics, Modern Foreign Languages and Business.

- integration of students with disabilities or learning difficulties. The college has for many years had a unit catering for students with learning disabilities. The emphasis of this unit is changing. From being a provider of bespoke courses and support it is becoming a provider of support for facilitating entry into the mainstream;
- curriculum re-organisation into a modular framework (see below).

Bilingual entitlement Open access resource-based learning is seen as one way of partially fulfilling this goal.

2. Relevance

Client services This is an integrated cross-college function under an assistant principal. It covers market research, marketing and publicity, central admissions, APL, schools and customer liaison and co-ordination of links with TECs.

Thus the process of identifying need, converting need into expressed demand, easing the entry into college and monitoring satisfaction once in college is seen as a coherent sequence. This process is proving very powerful in terms of effectiveness, reducing frustration and avoiding duplication.

College company The college has operated a subsidiary company for a number of years and any doubts about the necessity for such an operation have been eliminated by the changes wrought through the 1992 Act. Quite apart from tax advantages, the college has moved the bulk of non-Schedule II work and staff development into the company to reduce commitment from within the college budget.

Promoting partnership Partnerships with other agencies have been a strong feature of college development but as all colleges build partnerships we are not claiming to be unique in this respect; we merely recognise their role in preventing collegiate isolationism. A few examples are:

- close interaction with the TEC. This is often an uncomfortable relationship but nevertheless essential and, on balance, productive;
- FLINIC: (Flexible Learning Information Network in Clwyd) a colleges and schools organisation which exchanges and develops models of good practice;
- the Community Education Forum: a body set up as a result of the changes and pressures

generated by the Act. It will bring together all groups which fund and/or provide Schedule II and non-Schedule II work in the college catchment area. The Forum will allow some strategic planning and will perform the essential function of bringing together sponsors and groups seeking sponsorship, immediately:

- the North Wales Access Consortium, part of the Open College Network, which is to be further developed as a Credit Forum;
- numerous industrial liaison committees linking discipline areas to their appropriate industries;
- school links: although we compete quite strongly with schools in areas of curriculum overlap, we cherish those areas where we can co-operate for vertical integration or to form an educational 'cluster' for the development of a local culture of education and training. There is sufficient differentiation between us for the common interest in creating discerning and demanding customers to be more important than the mutual threat;
- Chamber of Commerce: establishing the College as a base for Chamber of Commerce activity throughout North Wales, has considerably improved the interface between college services and local industry;
- Menter Hiraethog: an organisation whose purpose is to stimulate new rural industry and with whom we co-operate strongly to identify and satisfy training needs.

This sample should give an idea of the variety of partnerships and indicate, that despite some *ad hoc*-ery, there is a coherent philosophy driving us along the road.

3. Efficiency

Underlying our work has been the sometimes conflicting requirement to improve efficiency. This has an added urgency when set against historical under-funding and recent severe reductions in budget.

In response to these pressures, unit costs have been reduced by a combination of the following factors:

- tighter control of cost centres including greater devolved responsibilities, allied to intensive central monitoring;
- non-replacement of senior posts and re-assessment of lecturing duties;
- the encouragement of 'area staffing' and a shift towards an annual student-hours workload for some lecturing staff;
- the increasing use of internal service level agreements to improve the quality of support services and extend the influence of support staff;
- planned target improvements for staff-student ratios linked to internal resourcing models;
- the transfer of all non Schedule-II provision to the subsidiary company;
- more focused use of the part-time staffing budget;
- rapid growth in student numbers and income.

In line with corporate strategy, major efficiencies have been achieved, allowing for an 18% growth in student numbers set against a ten per cent cut in budget in real terms. The existence of a corporate policy on quality assurance is crucial to gaining efficiency without a decline in effectiveness.

A MODULAR FRAMEWORK In September 1991 it was decided that the College would have in place a modular curriculum for September 1993. Our concept of modularisation follows closely that of *A Basis for Credit* (FEU 1992) and what we see as the logical outcomes of that document. We are primarily modularising assessment opportunities, giving credit for clusters of outcomes.

Why go modular?

As a college we are predisposed towards continuous but incremental change on the grounds that it is easier to manage and more likely to stick. We abandoned incrementalism in this area because islands of flexible learning in the college were being increasingly constrained by the lack of flexibility in the curricular, organisational and management information systems supporting them. Modularity will:

- allow access to assessment that is less seasonal;
- provide a teaching and assessment framework for roll on/roll off learning and qualifying;
- allow for variations in pace of student learning;
- open up the possibility of more flexible progression pathways, including the nature of the HE/FE interface;
- allow more efficient utilisation of staff, releasing funds for upgrading other resources and ensuring that we can deal with the downward pressure on unit costs;
- allow us to standardise a curricular 'currency' that can be used for equitable resource allocation throughout the college.

Essentially we:

- have built up a large bank of module descriptors of variable quality;
- have agreed that all NVQ programmes will be roll on/roll off next session, in addition to those which are already;
- are designing a cross-college timetable, probably based on blocks with a six-week roll over, for those areas which, due to external or internal constraints, are unable to become totally flexible next year. This will free up student progression through the modular maze and reduce tensions between the flexible and less flexible areas;
- are mapping modules onto courses to identify gaps and duplication, for timetabling and other planning purposes;
- are radically overhauling CMIS, guidance, tracking of achievement, resourcing, quality and all support systems that are currently centred on the course;
- have reached agreement in principle to build a common credit framework throughout North Wales and are likely to reach a similar agreement to cover the whole of the Principality. However, until the examining and validating bodies are involved, this will be an internal rather than a hard currency.

OVERVIEW

Achieving 'corporate transformation' requires the commitment and support of the entire college staff. It also requires focus on common ideals and strategic thinking from the senior staff and governors of the institution. Dynamic change involves a combination of the following:

- establishing a 'critical mass' supportive of change;
- a culture of consultation and involvement;
- structuring the college to meet defined needs within the community through partnerships, improving the service and the image of the institution;
- an organisation structure incapable of fossilising;
- utilising information systems to support change, e.g. networking;
- developing an ethos of constant self appraisal.

Huw Evans Tony Walker
Principal *Assistant Principal*

LOWESTOFT COLLEGE

Lowestoft is a further education college serving a semi-rural area of North Suffolk/South East Norfolk centred mainly on the coastal towns of Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth and the market towns of the Waveney Valley. However, it has a regional, national and international role in maritime and offshore technology training, electronics and data communication training.

There is currently a fairly small part-time HE provision, mainly in Engineering and Electronics (60 FTE students) but this will be significantly expanded during the next academic year by the introduction of two first-year degree programmes in Science and Electronics, and an HND in Business and Finance.

1991-2

Student FTEs	3,200
Staff FTEs	230

Number of college sites 5

Ninety-two per cent of the students are part-time, and 37.8% are aged 19+. Of the student population, 3.7% are from ethnic minority groups.

The college was reorganised in 1991 to produce a structure designed to take the college forward into a more independent era. Key areas identified for organisational and systems development relate to processes rather than structures, and include institutional research, resourcing models which reward internal collaboration, team-building activities and the need for effective communication at all times.

Lowestoft college is seeking both the Investors in People and BS5750 kitemarks.

THE PURPOSE OF LOWESTOFT COLLEGE Lowestoft College exists to provide education, training and related services which cater for the needs of its clients, students, and the community which it serves. To this end the College seeks to maximise:

Access	— to equality of opportunity
Quality	— of its environment and all its activities
Value	— in the provision of its services
Responsiveness	— to students and community needs
Innovation	— in the provision and relevance of its services
Achievement	— by students and staff of the aims of their learning programmes

In seeking to achieve these aims, the college recognises that:

- Access to equality of opportunity for students and members of our wider community will require the progressive reduction of any barriers to accessing the college's learning resources.
- The quality and value of the experience of those using or providing its services is crucial to the college's continued success and development, and will be the measure of its achievement.
- Quality is experienced by individuals, and the college will continue to focus upon a provision which through innovation, equality of opportunity and maximising access, is responsive to individual needs.
- Value is experienced both by individuals and groups. The college will continue to improve the services offered to individuals and groups and which significantly contribute to the economic and social development of the Waveney area, East Anglia and the national and international community.

- The college can only develop and deliver quality services through the establishment of productive partnerships between the college, its staff and students and with other organisations.
- To enable the college to develop, it is essential to include reference to viability as a hallmark of college provision. Used in this sense, viability refers to the need to develop college provision actively in a positive, practical and planned way to ensure that appropriate resources are acquired and effectively deployed.
- Education is an important means by which individuals and the community become aware of issues such as the environment and health.

A RE-ORGANISED COLLEGE

During the summer term of 1990, Lowestoft College embarked upon a major organisational review. It was intended to enable the college to organise what it was already doing and what it needed to do in a more purposeful and coherent way. The actual process of review was not new to the college but this time the emphasis was firmly upon enhancing the experience of students and providing the right support to our staff. The review methods adopted included:

- consultation meetings with the staff (by the Principal);
- consultation with governors, employers and students' union;
- feedback from moderators, HMI and external agencies;

The review focused upon two questions:

- How could we improve the overall experience of every student?
- How could we improve the level, type and organisation of college services to assist all staff in their work?

THE COLLEGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN The results of the review process were incorporated within the 1990 college development plan. The plan sought to synthesise the results of the review with the requirements of a rapidly changing external scene. Key priorities could then be identified and an agenda for action put together. Strategic organisational development ran through all this development.

A strategy for development

The 1990 plan contributed to proposals for college re-organisation, later published in *A Strategy for Development* (October 1990), which represented a major milestone in the college's institutional development. Key objectives included:

- establishing a comprehensive client services base;
- enhancing the course and services flexibility;
- enhancing accommodation facilities;
- re-focusing management time on these objectives and reflecting the needs emerging from financial delegation.

The plan required that an operational framework using certain success criteria should be established. These criteria were:

- a 'whole-college' approach;
- being student/client led;
- devolving responsibility to the appropriate level;
- team focus
- facilitating clear lines of communication;

- informing and consulting staff and students;
- accountability within an agreed framework for planning and control.

Fundamental principles

A Strategy for Development gave a rationale for a revised college-management framework based upon these principles:

- a sense of service;
- a sense of partnership;
- the primacy of the client's needs;
- staff needs at the centre of every manager's concern;
- the development of policies and processes facilitating effective delegation and communication;
- practical commitment to the underlying principles of access, quality, value, responsiveness and innovation.

The management framework

The management framework for the re-organised college was that:

'Effective delivery and learning and related services will be the responsibility of curriculum teams within programme centres, and service groups within service centres'

- Each of the programme centres will be the responsibility of a programme centre manager. Also, each programme centre will be supported by a client liaison officer.
- Each of the service groups will be the responsibility of a service group manager and will form part of a service centre.
- The need for a close and clearly defined relationship between strategic planning processes and the operational centres is recognised. Therefore assistant principal posts will be established to undertake responsibility for strategic planning and for

the strategic direction of groups or centres. Practical support to programme centre and service group managers will also be provided.

These assistant principal posts will be as follows:

- Assistant Principal — Client Services
- Assistant Principal — Programme Development
- Assistant Principal — Organisation Development
- Assistant Principal — College Services

DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

Assessing development

In December 1991 the college strategic planning group began an assessment which would form the basis of the 1992-5 strategic plan.

Areas that were examined included:

- a re-appraisal and definition of the college's aims and principles (its mission);
- an assessment of the college's current 'situation' and performance;
- an assessment of changes within its external and market environment;
- identification of strategic issues (i.e. external developments demanding response and influence, which could affect the college's performance)
- identification of the 'critical success factors' (i.e. what the college needs to do well if it is to survive and thrive);
- analysis of strategic opportunities;
- implications for college development planning.

The strategic plan 1992-5

Following a series of management development workshops, the strategic planning group produced the first draft of the 1992-5 strategic plan in January 1992. Key themes were:

- managing growth;
- external relationships;
- quality.

Strategies were set against issues relating to:

- markets and portfolio;
- capital and finance;
- human resource development;
- teaching and learning styles;
- physical resources development.

The likely impact of incorporation was a continued focus for deliberation and policy.

COLLEGE ACHIEVEMENTS — REFINING THE MISSION

The achievements of the college are best seen in relation to the college's stated mission. To what extent has the college — during a period of organisation transition set against rapid environmental changes — remained focused upon its values and principles?

— Access

Increasing access to the college portfolio and services is the basis of the college mission. It is the most widely accepted of the values and principles which underpin our activities and has influenced college priorities. The FTE intake has increased by 25% over the last two years. There has been a general increase in participation and a particular increase in the number of adult learners. Contributory factors include:

Programme development — student access to the curriculum is a priority for all curriculum managers. A commitment towards modularisation (with some programmes already available in this form), accreditation of prior learning and higher education opportunities have placed heavy demands upon staff development time, learning resources and accommodation.

Client services have achieved a high profile within the re-organised college. The individual and employer are now able to access the college through a well publicised education and training gateway — the college information centre. The centre is closely linked to marketing and business functions and, with retail services, they work as a client services team to ensure the smooth entry, transfer and progression of students and clients. A team of client liaison officers relates to specific curriculum teams across the college. College enrolment practice has also changed radically, geared towards student needs rather than the traditional queue. This has also proved much less stressful for staff!

— Quality

A curriculum and services quality policy has now developed within a college-wide quality assurance process. This process has been endorsed by the academic board which now focuses more sharply on the curriculum. The academic board is complemented by a services review board and both are informed by a quality steering group and supporting panels (including validation, review and evaluation, standards, projects and audit).

These developments are leading towards standardised procedures for course validation reviews and a process for evaluating and acting upon the outcome of those reviews. Most important, however, is heightened awareness of quality among staff and student. Curriculum and service discussions are framed around attention to quality standards. This has also made it easier to embark upon BS5750 and 'Investors in People' to enhance and complement the framework.

— Value

On the evidence of standard performance indicators, the college has increased in efficiency over the past two years. The value

to students and clients has been measured through participation levels and perception surveys.

— Responsiveness

There are difficulties in defining and measuring responsiveness but for many years the college has enjoyed an enviable reputation for its responsiveness and wholehearted espousal of the values of 'access and quality'.

— Innovation

The college's desire to be innovative is strong and its staff enjoy being at the forefront of development. We recognise, however, that innovative practice should be developed in relation to the college mission and that time spent on projects outside the mission is not always the best use of resources. The College promotes innovation in areas which have led to development of international markets.

— Achievement

The college has always recognised that enabling individuals to achieve is its primary purpose. However, we increasingly recognise that the performance of the institution will also be subject to scrutiny, a scrutiny, moreover, which may affect its external reputation and thus its health and resource bases, both so vital for continued development.

Success factors include:

- well publicised commitment to change;
- college-wide consultation on the college mission, principles and objectives;
- whole-college organisational restructuring around the mission, principles and objectives;
- constant validation against the mission;
- opportunity for regular re-appraisal.

Successes have been more easily achieved where there are strong and identifiable teams and where the roles of management and staff development have given priority to developing a team approach.

SOME DIFFICULTIES

— Communication issues

There are various but related difficulties which can adversely affect the sustained development of a corporate approach. For some, the message more than gets through, raising expectations and enthusiasm. If these expectations are not fully met it may cause disillusionment. For others, the message may not be heard or, if heard, not accepted. The problems of communicating effectively are well rehearsed but the difficulties of communication within an FE college are somewhat particular, involving stylistic, cultural and public expectations within and about the sector, established over a long time. There are also logistical difficulties facing an organisation comprising several hundred full and part-time staff working on a vast range of different programmes with work schedules serving many thousands of students. It does not provide the most straightforward of communication models. It is perhaps this aspect of organisational development which poses the most difficult and potentially fruitful challenge.

— Measurement of performance

Establishing a range of indicators which meet the needs inherent in the college's mission has presented some difficulties. The planning process currently underway towards the 1993-6 strategic plan will incorporate a range of objectives and measures relating to responsiveness, innovation, participation, access, quality standards, achievement, efficiency and effectiveness. It is hoped that the combined product of these measures will enable the college to judge its performance accurately.

against the overall strategic objective of 'sustained growth and development'. An optimum level of performance measurement has to be achieved whereby indicators effectively inform internal and external requirements but do not become disassociated from the overall purpose or a bureaucratic end in themselves!

— Acknowledging the obstacles

Strategic and curriculum changes present continuous challenges and it is important to acknowledge the obstacles which are inherent in the processes. Any change or development takes longer than at first envisaged and it is necessary to provide frequent short-term examples of progress. No strategy or plan will solve all the issues and yet that is an ideal towards which everyone strives!

At a time of unprecedented change in the FE sector, the frustrations that can be caused through seemingly imperfect solutions and expectations are timely reminders of the fundamental importance of strategic and curriculum planning for students and colleagues. Emphasis must be given to involving all staff in arriving at the 'college plan' while not overloading already pressurised teams. The 'Investors in People' programme is an excellent vehicle for this. Enabling staff to view their individual needs in relation to college objectives and, most importantly, demonstrating how staff can best contribute to the college mission are seen as key to the college's future development.

NELSON AND COLNE COLLEGE

Nelson and Colne is a tertiary college in a mixed rural and urban setting. There are a number of other colleges within relatively easy travelling distance.

1991-2

Student FTEs	2,099
Staff FTEs	172
Number of college sites	4

In 1991-2, 76.42% of students were part-time. 5.857% students were aged 19+. Ethnic minority students represented 14.8% of the 16-19 year old student population and 1.7% of 19+ students.

Nelson and Colne College is organised on a faculty/semi-matrix basis, with cross-college functions at various levels.

The college's statement of purpose makes the commitment to 'widen access for all' and pledges to 'continually monitor and evaluate its performance'. The Policies and Management Framework embraces performance indicators which involve the measurement of student numbers in each programme area by age, gender, ethnicity and special needs.

CORPORATE APPROACHES TO CURRICULUM AND STRATEGIC PLANNING It is now over two and half years since Nelson and Colne formulated its statement of purpose and aims focusing our attention on what the college should stand for and, in many senses, how it should act and behave. That statement, given below, is the result of a detailed consultative process with all college staff, both teaching and support, who were invited to participate by contributing their ideas and comments towards the college aims.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE Nelson and Colne College will meet the educational and training needs of its community by providing a high quality, supportive and flexible learning environment, by both anticipating and responding to change and by seeking to widen access for all.

In seeking to fulfil this purpose, the college aims to:

- develop effective internal and external communication;
- develop wide and effective participation by all sectors of the community;
- develop the participation of the individual in the learning process;
- promote parity of esteem and equality of opportunity for all;
- positively encourage social, cultural and educational diversity;
- pursue values of excellence and enjoyment in teaching and learning;
- take into account individual experience and provide appropriate opportunities for development and progression.

Since then, action planning and the creation of policies and procedures have been underpinned by our stated purpose and preparation for incorporation has hastened their creation and refinement. Amongst the list are: a revised Equality of Opportunity policy and code of

practice, student tutorial policy, course review and evaluation, staff review and recruitment and selection policy and procedures. What I hope has happened is that the college has manifested its philosophy in a culture of friendliness and warmth, mixed with rigour and a determination to enable its community to achieve success. As someone who firmly believes that you can tell a lot about a college by the way students and staff communicate, as well as by the physical environment, I would wish that the college's individuality or 'uniqueness' is perceived as soon as you enter the building.

The FEU project RP694 **Key Curriculum Developments**, was a timely opportunity to check that our supposedly student-centred focus was there in action, not just in thought. The methodology adopted at college to deliver the project, allowed a broadening of experience for a recently restructured senior management team. Members paired for each theme, so that a head of faculty with management expertise in a particular topic was joined by a colleague with little or no direct experience of the issue. As well as providing the opportunity for development and understanding, this was a deliberate strategy to promote a corporate view of curriculum planning. This need for a collective focus to college planning will, I am sure, be increasingly evident as incorporation becomes a reality. In dealing with the financial, personnel and political pressures of incorporation it will be vital that the senior management team remains clear and unified about the key issues underpinning strategic planning. It will also be important for members to support each other and to create a positive view of the future for their staff.

For the FEU project the formation of groups, again comprising staff across the college both teaching and support, assisted in awareness raising, as well as problem solving. The use of task groups, set up for a limited period to address key issues and almost always including support staff, has been established now for several years. The use of the audit within these groups was extremely helpful in emphasising a shift of

culture away from generated perception to measurement quality and targeting improvement.

Indeed, the project played another valuable role in the further identification of performance indicators (and in increasing the capability of management information systems) in order to ascertain college effectiveness. At the risk of oversimplification, in order for a college to improve its effectiveness and efficiency it has to know its starting point. Exercises carried out as part of the project, for example, developing and refining policies through gender, race and age monitoring of students, identification of participation through borough or post code, development of school leavers intake, monitoring and forecasting; customer care audits, course costings, etc., were extremely useful.

To take this a stage further, the college is now developing a range of performance indicators and other measurement factors in order to compile comprehensive profiles of its student body, its staff and the community. These will then be used as bases for target setting and strategic planning — a factual backcloth to quality improvement. The opportunity to focus on audits with adult students in particular, provides rich topics of discussion concerning the college ethos and the aim of identifying the needs of various groups of students within a composite statement of purpose. The probable increase of adult students on franchised HE courses may well sharpen potential conflicts and cause colleges to reassess their strategies as community colleges. Data collected on adult students will assist colleges in the development of these plans.

I hope too that we can build on the short-term work carried out through the quality theme on 'value added'. In an increasingly competitive market, getting to grips with what value added actually means will be an effective marketing tool and will emphasise the individuality of each college. As with all short-term projects (and this was extremely short in relation to the documents produced, recommendations made and interest raised), the danger is that once the work is finished, so is the project.

Each theme produced for Nelson and Colne College short-term and longer term action plans. It is the intention to look at the long-term objectives in the context of college strategic planning and to attempt to enmesh them within the planning process. The core skills theme, for example, is being continued within the college's TVEI development.

Obviously the success or otherwise of short-term objective setting within each of our five themes, depended on how advanced we were in our action planning and how specific the initiatives were. Within the adult theme, for instance, a great many short-term goals were achieved if one counts development of start-up work as the end. An 'open learning for business languages' initiative was established, HE developments were clarified, and APL pilots were put in place thanks to external funding. However, more questions were asked than answered concerning APL in the long term; in particular, promotion and marketing of the benefits to employers, identification of cost and price setting.

In a different way, the resourcing theme linking curriculum with resourcing, enabled us to gain ground in policy making. Testing models has only recently taken place, on a limited basis, but it did help us to think more clearly about how we should analyse costings. The danger in resourcing methodology is to become so focused on increasing efficiency that risk is eliminated, if one defines risk as allowing second chance or hitherto uncommitted students to begin programmes. As a college, and as part of our mission, we exist to give people second chances and to develop potential. In spite of all our efforts to counsel, assess and support students (particularly adult returners), some drop-out is inevitable, and this must be accepted.

When asked to describe the corporate approaches to curriculum and strategic planning used at Nelson and Colne College, if I were to be honest, I would say that we are at the stage of realising how much more there is to do than has been achieved. It is clear from what has been described so far, that the starting point is the student and

that planning has developed on this basis. Wherever possible, cross-college task groups have been used to develop action plans or procedures, or to set out recommendations for change. However the FEFC's focus, quite properly, on strategic planning within tightly defined parameters, has meant that some of the developmental processes will have had to be curtailed in the short term in order to meet deadlines.

What I think will happen, will be a system whereby college senior management, with the approval of governors, will set specific, prioritised, strategic objectives or targets. Within Nelson and Colne College, the means of achieving these targets will be the responsibility of cross-college task groups, led by a member of the senior management team, with representation from teaching and support staff and across faculties. This will certainly be the case with our curriculum plans. It is likely that the recent government pronouncements on a predicted increase of some 25% in 16-19 participation will not be matched by the same funding levels. Whilst there will be some programme expansion to accommodate the needs of the new students, we plan to develop flexible learning through resource-based learning and workshop activities as well as judicious use of lecturers. We wish to plan modular curricula, hoping that good sense will prevail and so that the academic and vocational divide will be bridged. One particular working group has been established to set out recommendations on how to serve foundation-level students: if our school leavers increase in line with government predictions, that will mean higher numbers of under-achievers or the uncommitted. We need to sort out what our curriculum offer is to these students as well as ensuring progression routes within the organisation.

The Academic Board will take on more of a quality assurance role. They will seek to ensure that systems and procedures are in place, that they are being followed and that review and evaluation take place within a formal structure,

not just of programmes but of support systems such as the library, student support services, school liaison team and marketing function.

Investing in people

Nelson and Colne College is currently submitting for the Investors in People award. With the assistance of the East Lancashire TEC (ELTEC) it is piloting the Investors in People's appropriateness for an educational organisation. The reason is simple; we are an organisation which believes in developing its students; we must extend that policy to all our workforce. In order to achieve the college aims, we state publicly that the college will:

- 'ensure that all staff have access to appropriate support, training and resources';
- 'continuously monitor and evaluate its performance'.

One of our successes has been our staff appraisal scheme, or 'staff review'; which was piloted during the last academic year. Nearly two years ago, a working party was drawn from teaching and support staff, with members across all grades and responsibilities. It developed a well thought out and carefully structured staff review scheme, appropriate to all college staff, which was piloted and adjusted. It is now in its first full year of operation and is being used or adapted, particularly for use by non-teaching staff, by other colleges in the region. Its success was due to the commitment of a senior member of staff and to ownership by the working group which sent out positive messages to all staff. The knowledge and understanding of all staff of our aims and the delivery of staff review has given us a good basis for submitting for Investors in People. We have just finished the questionnaire stage and I hope that the results will give us further targets to work towards in developing, communications with staff.

My opinion is that most of what exists organisationally within colleges will be examined either before or shortly after incorporation. We will revisit our organisational structure in the

next 18 months to ensure that it is the best means of achieving our aims. Before we do that, we shall refocus on our aims to see if they are still appropriate. In fact, a college restructuring took place shortly after the creation of the aims, in June 1990, which while retaining faculty line management also defined cross-college responsibilities and strengthened middle management. I can predict that we will wish to strengthen the operational role of middle managers within the college in order to allow the senior management team to develop their strategic management role. We have the beginnings of an action/market research function; that will grow, and could emerge, as our expertise grows in meeting the demands of the FEFC, the college's own needs for internal and external information and the growth of the 'prospector' in seeking external funding/sponsorship.

The mark of a successful college post incorporation will be to develop through reflecting on and learning from its own processes, so that it is confident enough to be positively self-critical. It may seem romantic, but self-analysis is truer and easier to digest when the organisation already knows and likes itself and when there is, between all staff, trust and consistency. The last two characteristics, which will be tried by incorporation, may be subject to external forces whether they are the government, TECs, the unions or other agencies. My concern is that the college is not knocked off balance by the instigation of a system which, although designed to improve our responsiveness to students and quality, may require so much time and energy from some senior management that the importance of students and learning is diminished.

It is my priority, therefore, to advance the priorities within the curriculum and the strategic plan on a corporate basis through the senior management team and to keep open lines of communication between senior management and staff and students.

Helen Gilchrist
Principal

TRESHAM INSTITUTE OF FHE

Tresham Institute of Further and Higher Education was born during the academic year 1991-2 out of a merger between two very different colleges: Tresham College, which was organised in departments, and Wellingborough College, organised on a matrix basis. The nearest other college is 18 miles away.

1991-2

Student FTEs	3,066
Staff FTEs	367
Number of college sites	4

Tresham Institute is situated in a rural area. Eighty-two per cent of the students are part time. The curriculum offer is predominantly vocational (68%) with four per cent higher education work.

Naturally the process of forging the new institution is ongoing. An interim organisational structure has been established, which will be reviewed one year after incorporation. At present, learning programmes are delivered by the schools of the institute while major functional areas such as learner support, learning resources, professional development, overseas and schools liaison, and industrial and commercial services are managed on a cross-institute matrix.

Within the new institute there is agreement that for a people-based service industry, mechanistic and systems-based quality assurance processes are inappropriate. Instead, quality circles, standard setting and monitoring, and total participation in all aspects of college life, are seen as appropriate methods of quality assurance and more particularly, quality development. The process is applied to administrative as well as academic areas.

The opportunity to reflect in tranquillity on the benefits of our involvement in the project is valuable, the more so since in further education 'the bliss of solitude' is rare. It provides time to take stock, to identify real achievements rather than the apparent ones, and to analyse and understand agendas that were, if not hidden at the time, at least artistically camouflaged.

So what were these hidden agendas for Tresham College? The first was probably shared by almost every participating college; the opportunity to use external funding to support a thinking process or a development to which the college was already committed. In common with most colleges, we had development plan objectives relating to adult participation and quality, to learner support services and to curriculum development which accommodated core skills. And in common with perhaps every college in the country, we were addressing the issue of resourcing in an attempt to move away from a historical base towards — we weren't quite sure what.

The FEU project gave staff at Tresham the chance to work in a team to explore the processes and the thinking around the five themes and this produced three chief benefits.

First, there was the benefit of working together as a team. This not only produced opportunities for challenge and testing, it also helped to develop a shared philosophy that underpinned the core themes and acted as their evaluative touchstone. Of this, more later.

Second, it gave the team the resources to conduct its own educational audit within the theme areas. The importance of this cannot be overestimated. We were surprised to find how many policies, processes and mechanisms already existed within the college that we had forgotten or simply taken for granted. We were reminded how important many of them were and of the need for maintenance, updating or review — or even simply re-emphasis.

Third, it gave us a shock. We were given the task of identifying innovative developments. We couldn't. We could only identify developments that were new to us, so we wrote about those. Subsequent networking with other colleges involved in the project has revealed that while some of those developments were innovative, others were not. Conversely, some of the developments that had long been in place at Tresham were regarded by others as highly innovative and worth developing. Clearly, there are messages here about re-inventing wheels, and the advantages of dissemination and networking.

Many of the outcomes described above were undoubtedly shared by almost every other college involved in the project. But in one respect Tresham College was different from most of the other participants. It was about to merge.

The merger with neighbouring Wellingborough College to form the Tresham Institute of Further and Higher Education had first been mooted in the late summer of 1991. It was born of a serious financial problem at Wellingborough and a recognition by the boards of the two colleges of an excellent curriculum fit that would provide a broad-based offer for the local community of north east Northamptonshire post incorporation. When Tresham College joined the project the merger had been agreed in principle and detailed work was beginning on shaping the philosophy, development and structure of the new institute.

Within the team at Tresham the project led to a debate on the common philosophical features of the theme areas we had chosen. All five necessarily crossed the organisational boundaries of a departmentally organised college such as Tresham and all five had a significant impact on the areas of learner and learning support. They had in common a distinct role in the empowerment of students, as opposed to a role in delivering learning programmes which was the prime responsibility of the departments.

The five areas also offered services to the programme deliverers. Through empowerment, they were able to ensure that those services could

be offered coherently. Only one major question remained. What organisational structure would support this philosophy and promote these services? The question was all the more urgent since Tresham was departmentally organised while Wellingborough operated on a matrix scheme.

The project contributed to a definition of the organisational structure of the new Institute by identifying the philosophy of empowerment and the types of cross-college issues that an effective organisational structure would need to be able to address. If resourcing, adult participation, quality, core skills and learner support services could be managed within a structure and learning programmes delivered effectively, then whatever its shape or name, that structure would be adopted.

In the event, it was not difficult. Senior managers at Tresham had developed skills in line managing the development and delivery of learning programmes. Senior managers at Wellingborough had developed skills in working more consensually across the organisation in functional areas. With the principal and vice-principal, they joined cross-college senior management in the academic, industrial and commercial, and learner support services areas to provide a central educational services team. This team, working to a shared philosophy of empowering its clients — students, staff, commercial customers — is now able to provide for the departments of the new institute the support that allows them to concentrate exclusively on the quality delivery of their learning programmes.

One practical example makes the point. The exploration of the Adult theme drew to the team's attention that Tresham's department of Adult and Continuing Education had, over the years, developed a strong vocational programme aimed at specific adult sectors, alongside its non-vocational programme. When the merger took place, its analogous department at Wellingborough was found to have been limited to non-vocational work. The resulting debate on the nature of adult education, its command of

resources, its integration within the wider college community and its need to be subjected to common quality assurance and planning processes has left the new institute well placed to deal with the requirements of the Funding Council and the LEA.

At all stages the college development plan was the critical vehicle for the delivery of action plans in the short, medium, and long terms; the executive arm of policy and the muscle of strategy. Team members came to recognise how all-pervading it was and its impact was the more significant because, after five years of detailed strategic development planning, we had begun to take the process for granted.

As the project progressed, however, we became increasingly aware of the opportunities the strategic development plan provided for both steering and charting the progress of the new institute and the need to use it to think in longer term objectives — in five and ten years' time. This in turn has led us to look for harder marketing information and firmer targets to assist the realisation of the long-term vision and to prevent it from being a fantasy. We have become hungry for data on which to base our planning assumptions.

PARTICIPATION The key to this positive approach to strategic planning is participation. Over the past five years at Tresham College, and now in the Institute as a whole, the emphasis has been on the contribution each member of the college can make to the planning process. The broad objectives of the strategic plan are debated and agreed by the academic board. Each school writes its own plan, with specific objectives for the following year and more general ones for the next three years plus target numbers that can be achieved and resourced. That plan is subject to full consultation with the school's course teams and some of its objectives may find their way into the strategic plan for the whole institute.

This participation is further emphasised in the Institute's quality improvement programme. At a course-team level and through the weekly study

group meetings, teams are encouraged to agree and to publish what they offer to the learner and what standards of performance are satisfactory, and then to evaluate their own performance against those standards in an annual review.

The Institute has found that these participative processes create shared wisdom and imagination, encourage ownership and a shared vision, and develop confidence and trust among staff.

As a new establishment serving a range of communities in an incorporated world, Tresham needed a new mission statement. At the time of writing (November 1992) our evaluation of responses to consultation on the mission statement is in hand. The many responses have come from all kinds of staff and reflect a thoughtful awareness of the need to create a vision of the Tresham Institute that will inform and test strategic developments over the years. They indicate a belief on the part of staff at all levels that they have a contribution to make in forming and expressing that vision, and a real interest in it being appropriate.

There is also an enthusiasm to use this opportunity to look at the wide range of educational policies approved by the two former colleges; to compare them, revise them and develop them to meet the needs of the new situation in the new institution. This is being done by the academic board and its sub-committees and panels, which are open to all the staff of the Institute.

Further, it is recognised that there is a serious need to test the effectiveness of these developments, to ensure that there is indeed effective understanding, ownership, and commitment. It is for this reason that, with the support of the local Northamptonshire TEC, the new Institute is participating in Investors in People. We are aware that it will take time, the awaited emergence of the mission statement and the organisational difficulties of the merger will guarantee that, but in the final analysis, the accreditation may be less important than the process of preparing for it.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE The experience of Tresham, because of the merger, will be different from most other participating colleges, although perhaps only because, organisational upsets aside, the merger and formation of a new Institute has provided us with more opportunities for change and development. Some of those opportunities — notably the formulation of a new mission statement — have been taken readily and with enthusiasm. Others, such as the wider dissemination of a participative strategic planning process or the introduction of a quality improvement programme based on self-imposed standards, will take longer to take root. But the soil is fertile.

CONCLUSIONS Don't wait until you can do everything in the logical order. You'll wait forever. By rights, we should have begun all of our processes with the formulation of the mission statement but we couldn't wait that long and we had to start somewhere. So we began in media res and then worked back to it. What was good enough for Homer and Virgil is good enough for us. And it worked.

Take careful stock of what you have before you take on board something new. You may be — as we were — very surprised to find out what

processes and mechanisms you already have. Just because they are embedded and taken for granted, that doesn't mean that they are no longer useful or even innovative.

This next is perhaps self-evident; provide the widest opportunity for staff to share in the development of the vision. Don't worry too much about hare-brained schemes and fantasies dominating the agenda. Trust colleagues to test the ideas and weed out the science fiction.

Following on from this: if colleagues can participate in the vision, they can assist in the objectives that build towards it. And in doing this, they will develop the crucial confidence to set their own standards. It is then a very short step towards building on strength and achievement, and identifying shortcomings and weaknesses, and rectifying them.

Finally, there is the need to think on a much longer strategic timescale. The three-year plan is no longer strategic; it is increasingly an operating statement.

Richard Oberman
Vice-Principal

YEOVIL COLLEGE

Yeovil College is a tertiary college in a rural location. The nearest neighbouring college is over 15 miles away.

1991-2

Student FTEs	2814.6
Staff FTEs	345
Number of college sites	4

Seventy-nine per cent of the students are part time and 52% are aged 19+. Students from ethnic minority groups represent 0.7% of the student population.

The college is committed to providing a flexible curriculum accessible to all students including adults. The college has recently undergone a change in organisational structure. In the previous structure, curriculum and students were separated from resources by allocating the two areas to two vice-principals. The college's new management structure has addressed this issue while, at the same time, adjusting for the management of incorporation. A curriculum officer post has been created and located within the senior management of the college.

Yeovil College is adopting a TQM approach to quality and is registering for Investors in People. The college has a director of staffing within its new management structure.

YEOVIL — A CURRICULUM-DRIVEN COLLEGE

Mission or purpose

I have an almost pathological revulsion to the phrase 'college mission statement' which stems from a feeling that it implies a pious, 'we will do good to you', perhaps almost blinkered, approach. My preference is for a statement of purpose to give a calmer, more rational and hopefully more all-embracing basis for what we do. In curriculum matters I think this distinction is vital because development of this sort cannot be rushed if it is to be successful, and 'mission' implies overdrive whereas purpose is determined but steady.

I mention this because the current processes of curriculum development and their status generally in Yeovil College go back at least eight years. In talking to all the staff in September 1984 I made it clear that our aim should be 'to provide a flexible curriculum which stretches across the post-16 requirements of students from craft level to advanced general and vocational education. The curriculum should be accessible to all students, including adults'. A version of this statement later became our major aim and the yardstick by which all our work was measured. In these more pragmatic days it has been necessary to subsume it into a broader statement of purpose for the eyes of the FEFC and our new corporation, but student programmes, quality and flexibility still lie at the heart of this new statement.

The management system of Yeovil College is aimed at ensuring on the one hand that students get individual attention and a personally designed programme and on the other that all our teaching resources are available to all our courses. This is why Yeovil does not have departments with all their potential duplication, their innate divisions and their administrative rather than student-centred agendas. It seems to me to be unnecessarily difficult to ensure parity of treatment for students and between programmes without a flexible management system.

The driving forces behind our curriculum work at Yeovil are accessibility and parity but they are not followed through in any spirit of levelling down and the watchwords in major published documents are 'quality, flexibility and care' implying a total philosophy of helping each of our students to achieve the best from themselves. These are generalities but ones which I believe give a clear picture of the kind of college we are striving to be. In simple terms I am looking for a curriculum and delivery which give the broadest possible opportunities to the greatest number of students and which do not have inbuilt discriminatory factors.

Practical steps

All a principal can really do is to make clear on a regular basis where he or she stands. This gives staff some clear directional guidance and provides them with a baseline or safety net if they get into difficulties. The generalities have been repeated in staff meetings and in writing, culminating in their acting as a starting point for our most recent review document *The College and its Curriculum*, of which more later. They also give coherence to a series of individual steps which, although to some extent self-contained, have all contributed to the overall progress of the college in curriculum matters.

Three or four key events took place as long ago as 1984-5 and the first was probably the decision to develop CPVE Mark 1 in a fairly broad way. The fact that BTEC Firsts torpedoed this development is not important, since the long-term significance of CPVE at Yeovil has been the stimulus it gave to staff development, particularly in relation to more student-centred teaching and learning strategies. This broke a lot of new ground, created new staff networks and at the least smoothed the path for later developments. Some CPVE work continued, of course, and has now flowed into the Individual Education Course (IEC) which gives genuinely personal programmes to all our lower achievers.

At approximately the same time that CPVE was acting as a catalyst for staff attitudes in general, it was important that managerial approaches were also loosened up. The curriculum delivery

structure at Yeovil (not a matrix really but a flexibly disguised hierarchical system) depends on the inter-relationship of the deans and heads of school. Following tertiary reorganisation in the mid 1970s there had been a tendency to restrict the heads of school to the resource management part of their role. Important though this is, the more vital task of leading a team of staff to meet the requirements of the college programmes as posed by deans, inevitably meant that the heads did have a curriculum role. A three-day think tank was the starting point for the proper recognition of the heads of schools' full involvement in curriculum development. The creative tension between the dean's macro view and the more micro involvement of the heads has strengthened the fabric of college provision ever since — especially as the two act collaboratively and are never in wasteful competition. The complementary viewpoints of two levels of management are also invaluable in checking the quality of our programme delivery.

While concentrating on staff involvement and motivation it was also important that nitty-gritty practicalities did not get in the way of any movement towards greater flexibility in managing the curriculum as a whole. The major potential barrier is always the college timetable and following a whole series of discussions, working groups and feedback sessions which ended with full debate in Academic Board, we gave birth to a nine-to-five whole-college timetable framework in a little less than nine months. Starting and finishing times and breaks were standardised and an agreed timetable building block of 55 minutes was accepted. The precise length was, of course, the result of complex compromises but it did allow us proper cross-college tutorial time and a staff meeting slot as valuable side benefits. The major improvement, however, was that we did not have to back away from curriculum flexibility because 'the timetable will not allow it'.

Once the system was in place, in the shape of a common timetable framework, some detailed work on the vehicles themselves was necessary and from 1987-9 much time and energy was spent

in producing curriculum guidelines for all our programmes and on a course review and evaluation process. Initially, as you might expect, the latter was too complex and time-consuming but it has now been refined into a valuable tool for students, course teams and college management. Indeed the whole process is being further reviewed as a major plank in our quality assurance systems post incorporation.

Two outside influences have also had a key part in strengthening the focus on curriculum as the driving force of the college. The first of these has been the successful development of Wessex modular A levels. Within the college this has since led to increasing use of a modular approach to A levels and to the common first year in Science spanning A level and BTEC. The other relevant national development is, of course, core skills.

Involving college staff

College staff have been involved in both national projects and the cross-fertilisation this has encouraged has been invaluable. All this work needed to be tied in to the central management processes of the college and this has been achieved in two further ways. We had a specific sub-committee of the academic board for curriculum review but once the system had been agreed, piloted and monitored, its *raison d'être* and certainly the excitement had largely gone. For the past two years, therefore, I have chaired a curriculum development committee with a much broader brief. It involves staff at all levels with a key role in this part of our work and its importance is emphasised as the only sub-committee chaired by the principal.

In terms of management structure we have made only slight modifications to our senior team to meet the challenge of incorporation. However a significant part of those changes has been the creation of the post of college curriculum officer as a support to the principalship and deans, and as a necessary counterweight in the strategic planning process to more resource-oriented senior staff. At the same time, after a very thorough

internal process, we have been able to create four new senior lecturer upgradings specifically for teaching quality. The only additional responsibility for these new posts is to share in curriculum and staff development delivery — not management because that would defeat the object of the exercise.

The whole curriculum pilot

Although the steps described in the previous section are inter-related and part of a total and deliberate approach to the management and operation of the college, they do not represent a focus of the kind envisaged by the project. At Yeovil, however, they have been the prerequisite for the development of the whole-curriculum pilot since it is an organic growth and not something imposed on the college from the top — even though I have been more than happy to act as the grit in the oyster.

The impetus for recent developments was the appointment of a new vice-principal and director of studies, in the autumn of 1989. It seemed sensible to take this opportunity to review our curriculum and its development, and working with the group of deans the new VP co-ordinated the production of *The College and its Curriculum* in April 1990. This document stressed the centrality of curriculum development in the college and the rationale for continuing review and change. It also laid out clear operating principles, including a statement of student entitlement, and mapped the current state of play at Yeovil in relation to all the major initiatives in which we were involved from TVEI Extension to APL, and our relationship with the local TEC. I launched it at a full staff meeting and its implications were then fully discussed by each teaching school with a senior member of staff.

Work on the implications for the college led to setting up the whole curriculum pilot in 1991-2 which, following a review by the curriculum committee, was expanded for a second pilot year in 1992-3. Alongside this broad development, the specific BTEC National/A level in Science pilot previously mentioned, has been looking in great

detail at the possibilities for greater commonality within our total programme.

At this stage of the work, if I were to pick out one aspect, it would be the 'planning for success' process and its associated progress planning documentation. The reason is not that I think we have produced the perfect paperwork but rather that the process provides the key which can best unlock staff energy for the benefit of students. This key is a simple but basic method of ensuring that both tutors and subject lecturers effectively contribute to the students' development in a unified rather than in a fragmentary fashion. Apart from anything else, this gets rid of the 'its his/her job' syndrome and ensures that the whole-curriculum approach permeates the staff more completely.

CURRENT PROBLEMS I use this heading since, with luck and hard work, today's problem can often become tomorrow's next step forward. I do not wish to dwell on detailed difficulties but to emphasise two more general matters of concern. The first is the need to carry the staff along with the momentum of the college. Nothing is worse for a leader than reaching an important turn in the road, looking back and finding that the troops have not rounded the previous corner. Even after eight years or so of deliberate marching in the same broad direction, I am aware that although we have more than passed the balance point with the number of staff who understand what we are about and have a commitment to it, there is still a sizeable minority who must be more prepared to accept change as a condition of life at the college. There is no simple answer to this problem — only an unrelenting effort to involve staff in discussion, to give them a share in detailed decision-making and always to be prepared to explain points of concern. It is here that the cohesiveness of the teaching schools can prove so helpful.

The second challenge to be addressed is of course the need to properly relate the development of the curriculum to the strategic planning process and thus to the financial control systems required by the FEFC. Fortunately there is no doubt that the quality of the curriculum and of its delivery are what we really have to sell and therefore any sensible strategic plan must spring from that base. It also helps that the Funding Council sees students and provision and planning for quality as key elements in its requirements. If we are to be positive we must continue to start from these elements and see how far our resources can be stretched to satisfy them. The other important aspect is to ensure that the cost control mechanisms support optimum delivery of the curriculum and do not frustrate it. That however is the subject for another paper — suffice it to say that we are working on it!

Successes

There is really only one satisfactory way to measure success, , and that is whether it works for students. At present we have no systematic way of answering this important question other than general information about things like retention rates. However I do have to hand the results of a survey of some 300 of our A-level students who might be expected to be more inclined to formality. Interestingly their major dislikes are clearly expressed — 'when you are just lectured at and have no chance to learn for yourself', as are their preferences — 'a proper variety of challenging learning activities' and 'a high level of participation by students'. With their support Yeovil College will continue down the road of increasing flexibility in programmes and delivery represented by the Whole Curriculum Project. I have no doubt that this sustained emphasis will also underpin our success in the marketplace.

Noel Kershaw
Principal

information

COLLEGES AND THEMES

Participation

Newark and Sherwood

Institutional development

Coleg Glan Hafren
Derwentside
Eastleigh
Lowestoft

Modularisation

Bradford and Ilkley
Coleg Glan Hafren
Kingsway
Llandrillo
Loxley
Solihull

NVQs

Cheshire
Cheshire
Filton
Gateshead
Harlow
Isle of Wight
Lewisham
Norfolk

Resourcing *all colleges*

Adults *all colleges*

Quality *all colleges*

Core skills

Nelson and Colne
Tresham
Yeovil

Collaboration

Cheshire
Derwentside
Harlow
Isle of Wight
Lowestoft

Flexible colleges

Bradford and Ilkley
Gateshead
Handsworth
Llandrillo

Learner and learning support

Barnet
Eastleigh
Filton
Handsworth
Loxley
Nelson and Colne
Newark
Norfolk
Solihull
Tresham
Yeovil

RELEVANT FEU PUBLICATIONS

Institutional development

Standards in Action (1993)

TDLB standards in FE (1992)

CEMP: a organisation and management development system (1991)

Development programmes for FE governors (1991)

Planning human resource development through equal opportunities (gender): a handbook (1990)

Training for curriculum development (1989)

Planning staff development: a guide for managers (1987)

Staff development for a multicultural society

Staff development for support staff (1987)

The personnel function in further and higher education (1987)

Support staff in further education: staff development needs (1986)

On a clear day you can see management (1990)

Resourcing

Training credits: the implications for colleges (1993)

Resourcing tomorrow's colleges (1992)

John Evans (unpublished) MBA material

Quality

Measuring performance in the education of adults (1991)

Quality matters (1991)

Performance indicators in the education of adults (1990)

Towards an educational audit (1989)

Adults

Adult learners and sixth-form colleges (1993)

Educational guidance services for adults UK directory (1993)

Paying their way: the experiences of adult learners in VET in FE colleges (1993)

Information in educational guidance: strategies for action (1992)

Educational guidance in groups (1992)

Quality education and training for the adult unemployed (1992)

Innovation in access (1991)

Adult compacts (1991)

Educational guidance for adults: identifying competences (1991)

Educational guidance for adults and public libraries (1991)

Developing a marketing strategy for adult and continuing education (1990)

Providing for adults : a college initiative (1990)

Adults in FE colleges (1990)

Local innovation in adult education and training (1989)

Modularisation in adult education and training (1989)

Partnerships in continuing education (1989)

Developing educational guidance for adults: a handbook for policy makers, managers and practitioners (1989/1993)

Employment training (3 bulletins 1988, 1989, 1990)

Provision and participation in adult education (1897)

Supporting adult learning (1987)

Collaboration

Incorporation and community care (1993)

Working together (1989)

Collaboration in training and updating rural workforces (1989)

Quality in NAFE (1987)

Flexible colleges

Understanding assessment (1993)
Individuality in learning pack (1992)
Flexible Colleges Parts 1 and 2 (1991)
Individuality in learning bulletin (1990)
Individuality in learning report (1990)
The assessment of prior learning and achievement — the role of expert systems (1990)
Teaching and learning strategies: an evaluation of BTEC courses (1990)
Flexible learning in perspective (1989)
Learning by doing (1988)

Learner and learning support

Learner support services in further education (1993)
Supporting learning 2 (1993)
Management information systems and the curriculum (1993)
Managing learning (1993)
Learning support (1989)
Supporting transition to adulthood (1989)
Planning NAFE (1988)
Transition to adulthood (1986)
Tutoring (1982)

Core skills

Languages in further education (1993)
Core skills action pack (1993)
Core skills in in action (1992)
Colleges going green (1992)
Core skills initiative (1990)

National vocational qualifications

NVQs and the construction craft industry (1992)
Supporting embedding projects (1991)
VET— briefing notes ABC (1991)
VET briefing notes retail (1991)
Implications of competence-based curricula (1989)
NVQ bulletins 1-2 (1989, 1989, 1990)
The changing face of FE: issues 1-6

Modularisation, credit framework and credit-based systems

A basis for credit? 2 (1993)
Discussing credit (1993)
OCN: participation and progression (1993)
CAT network newsletter : The CATalyst (1993)
A basis for credit? 1 (1992)
OCNs: a handbook (1991)

PARTICIPATING COLLEGES

Barnet College
Bradford and Ilkley Community College
Cheshire College of Agriculture
Coleg Glan Hafren (Cardiff) Tertiary College
Derwentside College
Eastleigh College
Filton College
Gateshead College
Handsworth College
Harlow College
Isle of Wight College

Kingsway College
Lewisham College
Llandrillo Technical College
Lowestoft College
Loxley College
Nelson and Colne College
Newark and Sherwood College
Norfolk College of Arts & Technology
Solihull College of Technology
Tresham College
Tresham College

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